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ISSN 0964-6221

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- New York, New York! - Ben Graff immersed himself in the Big Apple's chess scene
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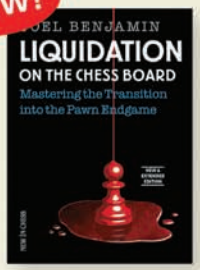

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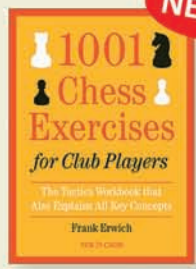

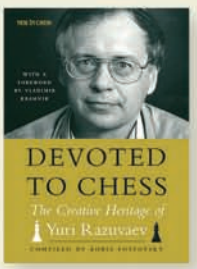

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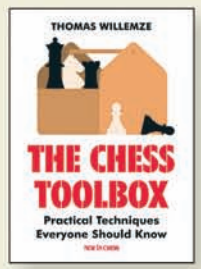

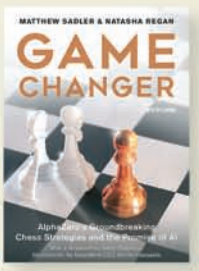

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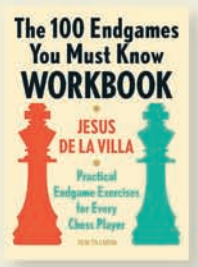

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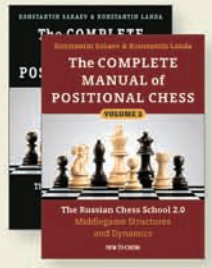

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein **@TelegraphChess**

Chess Galore!

The chess calendar has virtually no free days in 2019. Barely a day will go by this year without some great chess to watch online. Such is the fixture congestion, the London Chess Classic is likely to be sandwiched between the last leg of the Grand Chess Tour in India, which ends on November 27th, and the final leg of the FIDE Grand Prix, which begins on December 10th in Tel Aviv.

So just when you thought it wasn't possible to have another top-flight event, another one appears and it's in the UK!

Just as the magazine goes to press, Magnus Carlsen, Ding Liren, Vishy Anand and one Russian player, to be confirmed, will play a weekend rapid tournament in Scotland. It's being sponsored by the Lindores Abbey Distillery which has records showing chess was played there 500 years or so ago. Battle will be joined in the distillery itself, overlooking the abbey ruins, which no fewer than five monarchs have visited and where the monks are recorded as having played chess.

The identity of the fourth player is as yet unknown because most of the leading Russian players are engaged in the first leg of the FIDE Grand Prix as I write. Grand Prix events are four-round knockouts, so I'm assuming one of the first-round losers will get a nice consolation prize of a trip to a picturesque part of Scotland, just outside Perth and an hour from Edinburgh. A full report next time.

A world-class tournament has washed up on Scottish shores, and also features whisky!

Three from Four

The 2019 Grand Prix series comprises four tournaments, in Moscow, Riga, Hamburg and Tel Aviv. There are 21 participants who compete in three events each and score points based on how far they advance in each 16-player knockout. When the Moscow tournament got underway, Wesley So found himself on the brink after losing in only 25 moves to Jan-Krzysztof Duda. It's difficult to know what went wrong here, but it appears the American forgot his preparation.

J.K.Duda-W.So
Moscow 2019
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d3 0-0 6 0-0 d5 7 exd5 ♘xd5 8 a4 a6 9 ♖e1 ♗g4 10 ♘bd2 ♔h8?!

A novelty, but not a good one. 10...♗a7 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♘e4 f6 13 b4 ♘ce7 14 ♗d2 ♔h8 15 ♘g3 ♗f7 16 b5 slightly favoured White in Bacrot-Matlakov, Bastia (rapid) 2018.

11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♘e4 ♗a7 13 ♘g3 ♗g6

With the e5-pawn and h5-bishop under attack, So sacrifices a pawn as White's extra one will be doubled. After 13...♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 White has a clear advantage, since 14...♘de7 15 ♘e4 ♕d7 16 ♘g5 is too strong, and if 16...♘d8 17 ♖xe5 f6 18 ♘xh7! or 16...♘f5 17 ♕h5.

14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♖xe5 ♘b6 16 ♕f3 c6 17 ♗f4 ♗b8 18 ♖ee1 ♘xc4 19 dxc4 ♕h4?! 20 ♘e2 ♗a7?

The bishop-pair is not an advantage when one is buried and the other lacks a stable square, but 20...♗xf4 21 ♕xf4 ♕xf4 22 ♘xf4 ♗c2 23 c5 is positionally dominating.

21 ♗d6 ♖fe8 22 ♘f4 ♗c2 23 c5 a5 24 ♖e2 ♗b3

Instead, 24...♖xe2 25 ♕xe2 ♗f5 26 ♖e1 h6 27 ♕c4 ♔g8 28 ♗e7 g5 29 g3 traps the queen.

25 ♖a3 1-0

So preferred to save his energy for the return game rather than suffer 25...♗e6 26 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 27 ♖xe6 fxe6 28 ♖b3.

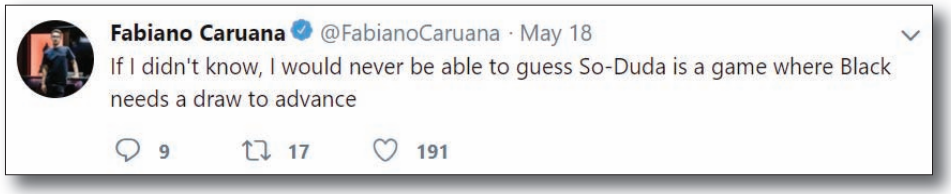
In the second game I was expecting Duda to play something sold, but instead he came out fighting with the Sicilian Dragon, a choice which also surprised Fabiano Caruana.

So needed no invitation to play the Yugoslav Attack and levelled the score. Shak Mamedyarov and Anish Giri were two of the stars who fell at the first, eliminated by Radoslaw Wojtaszek and Daniil Dubov respectively.

The top two players in the Grand Prix will qualify for the Candidates, although right now, it's hard to see Magnus being dethroned any time soon.

Magnus's High Five

Since retaining the world title in London last November and being freed from his epic drawing streak of 21 games, the champ has gone on the rampage. He's won the World Blitz, Wijk aan Zee, the Gashimov Memorial,


Fabiano Caruana @FabianoCaruana · May 18
If I didn't know, I would never be able to guess So-Duda is a game where Black needs a draw to advance
9
17
191

the GRENKE Classic and then, with ease, the Grand Chess Tour 2019's first meet in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Carlsen's domination at GRENKE felt like the standout performance so far in 2019 as he finished on 7½/9, some one and a half points clear of Fabiano Caruana who was the only other unbeaten player and confirmed his status as the best of the rest.

Magnus despatched three elite players: Peter Svidler, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Levon Aronian. Tournament commentator Peter Leko made the point that it reminded him of when Kasparov was on a roll – even the best players seemed to play less well against Garry.

The innocent-looking 10 ♗d2 was actually a novelty and a bit of clever psychology from Carlsen, rather than the main lines of 10 ♗b5+, 10 ♗xf6 ♕xc3+ 11 ♔f1 gxf6 and 10 ♘b5. The critical test was of course 10...♘xe4, but doubtless the spectre of computer prep dissuaded Aronian.

M.Carlsen-L.Aronian
Karlsruhe 2019
Queen's Gambit, Vienna

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 e4 ♗b4 6 ♗g5 c5 7 ♗xc4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♕a5 10 ♗d2!? 0-0

10...♘xe4 11 ♕g4 ♘xd2 12 ♕xg7 ♘xc4 13 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 14 0-0 seems to be OK for Black.

11 ♕e2 e5 12 ♘b3 ♕c7 13 0-0 ♗g4

The bishop gets a little stranded on h5, although after 13...b6 14 ♖ac1 ♗b7 15 f3 White is also a bit better.

14 f3 ♖c8 15 ♗d5

Wisely side-stepping 15 ♗xf7+?! ♕xf7 16 fxg4 ♕c4.

15...♘xd5

15...♗d7 16 c4 is also good for White as an exchange on d5 rules out ...♘c6.

16 exd5 ♗h5

White's passed pawn and space advantage give him the edge. Moreover, his bishop is the more influential as it soon acquires a target on b6, but if 16...♗f5 or 16...♗d7 then there was 17 f4.

17 c4! ♘d7

The champ has quite simply been in utterly dominant form and back to his best of late. Inside we'll see how Carlsen totally dismantled the field at the Gashimov Memorial and then the GRENKE Chess Classic in Germany - will anyone be able to lay a glove on him this year?

17...♕xc4? 18 ♖ac1 ♕xe2 fails to 19 ♖xc8#.

18 ♖fc1 b6 19 a4

19...a5

19...♘c5 20 ♘xc5 bxc5 might have been better. If 20...♕xc5+ 21 ♗e3 ♕d6 22 a5 when Black dare not capture on a5 and so b6 will come under pressure.

20 ♕f2 ♕d6 21 ♗e3 ♗g6 22 ♕d2 f6 23 ♕b2 ♖c7 24 ♘d2 ♘c5 25 ♕a3 ♖d8

25...♕d7 seems reasonable, unpinning and pressuring a4. Then 26 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 27 ♕b3 ♕c7 28 ♖c3 ♖b8 29 ♘e4 ♗xe4 30 fxe4 ♕d6 looks tenable.

26 ♖c3 f5?! 27 ♖e1 e4?! 28 fxe4 fxe4

Or if 28...♘xe4 29 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 30 ♘xe4 fxe4 31 ♗f4, which wins the exchange.

29 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 30 ♘xe4 ♕e5 31 ♖ce3

White unravels and stays a pawn ahead because if 31...♖xc4? 32 ♘d2. Now he sets about invading on the seventh and attacking g7.

31...♖cc8 32 h3 ♕c7 33 ♘d2 ♖e8 34 ♖e7 ♖xe7 35 ♖xe7 ♕d8 36 ♕e3 ♖c7 37 ♖e6 ♖c5 38 ♕b3 1-0

Gawain's World

Following his success at Reykjavik, as I mentioned last month, Gawain Jones moved on to Malmo, via Italy, and was a deserved winner of the TePe Sigeman & Co tournament. It was Jones's best ever result in an all-play-all and his undefeated 5/7 was

half a point better than top seed Pentala Harikrishna could manage.

Jones could not have had a better start against the Iranian board one.

P.Maghsoodloo-G.Jones
Malmo 2019

White has just played 24 ♘a5-c6?, a completely natural-looking move that could have lost brilliantly had Jones found a deeply hidden resource.

24...♖xc1+?

24...♘h3+! 25 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 threatens mate on g2 and then after 26 ♘xe7+ ♔h7 27 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 the white queen cannot defend the rook, so Black wins. The other main point is the beautiful 26 f3 ♘g4!! 27 ♘xg4 ♗xf3!! 28 ♕xf3 (if 28 exf3 ♕g2#) 28...♖xc1+ 29 ♔f2 ♗xd4+ 30 ♘xd4 ♕f1+ 31 ♔e3 ♖c3+ and wins.

25 ♕xc1 ♔h7 26 f3

26 ♕c5! would have been better.

26...♘d7! 27 ♕c3

If 27 ♘xd7? ♗xd4+ 28 ♘xd4 ♕xc1.

27...♘e6 28 ♘xe7?

This loses, but 28 ♘b4 ♗b7 is strong and even 28...♕xc3 29 ♗xc3 ♗xb3 30 axb3 ♗xe5 is a clear pawn.

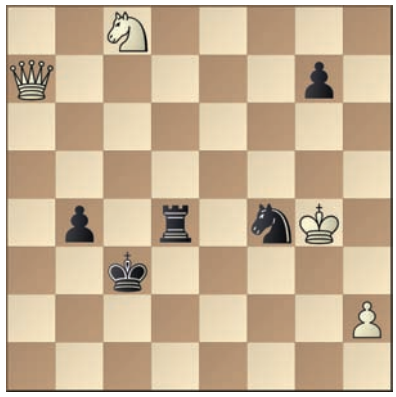
28...♕b7!

Creating an X-ray attack on the knight on e7. Black wins material in all lines: 29 ♘xd7 ♗xd4+ wins, 29 e3 ♘xe5 30 ♗xe5 ♕xe7 is a piece, and if 29 ♘5c6 b4! overworks the queen. Jones went on to convert after **29 f4 ♘xe5 30 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 31 e4** (if 31 ♕xd4 ♘f3+ 32 exf3 ♗xd4+) **31...♘ec6 32 ♔h1 ♘e7 33 ♕c7 ♕xc7 34 ♘xc7 b4** (0-1, 61)

14-year-old Indian star Nihal Sarin is very much one for the future and it was great to see him playing in Malmo, although he began by being swindled by his near namesake, Ivan Saric.

It's pleasing to see the young generation of Indian Grandmasters getting more opportunities. Nihal Sarin must have thought he was off to a flyer at the Sigeman, but the 2018 European Individual Champion Ivan Saric had other ideas. What a swindle!

N.Sarin-I.Saric
Malmo 2019



Black is dead lost of course, but he has everything defended for the moment, while the white knight is temporarily out of play and if 60 ♕xg7?? ♘e6+.

60 ♕a1+ ♔d3 61 ♕d1+ ♔c3 62 ♕c1+ ♔d3 63 ♔f3 ♘d5 64 ♘d6 ♖f4+ 65 ♔g3 ♘c3!

Ingenious. White has no checks, if 66 ♕xf4? ♘e2+ or 66 ♔xf4? ♘e2+, and maybe the b-pawn will move a step closer to promotion.

66 ♕a1 ♖f6!

Now the white knight is slightly dominated.

67 ♕a6+?

Walking into a horrible pin, but White was already befuddled by Black's resourcefulness. If 67 ♘b7 b3 and 67 ♘e8 ♖g6+ 68 ♔f4 b3 is a punt, but White should still win.

67...♔c2

Still no checks and the b-pawn is ready to go.

68 ♕c4 ♖xd6 69 ♕xb4 ♖d4!

Gaining a tempo to construct a fortress.

70 ♕b7 g5 71 ♕g7 ♖d5 72 ♕g6+ ♔b3 73 ♔g4 ♔b2 74 ♕xg5 ♖xg5+ 75 ♔xg5 ♘e2 76 h4 ♘g3 77 h5 ♘xh5 ½-½

60 Seconds with...

IM Paul Littlewood

Born: Skegness, 18th January 1956.

Place of residence: St Albans.

Occupation: Retired.

Enjoyable? Yes.

And home life? Married to Fiona – second marriage and very happy.

But sometimes good to escape to: Bridge tournaments.

Sports played or followed: Bridge and chess. I also enjoy watching snooker and was a county badminton player in my youth.

A favourite novel? So many, but really enjoyed *Far from the Madding Crowd*, as it was the first serious novel I ever read.

Piece of music? Handel's *Messiah*.

Film or TV series? *Dr. Strangelove*.

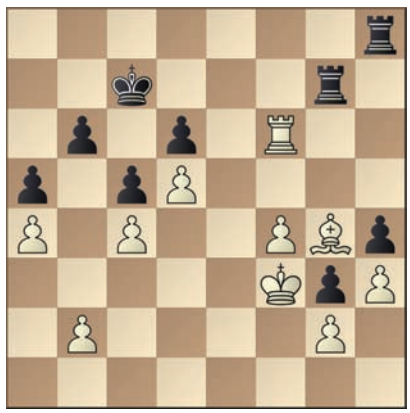
What's the best thing about playing chess? Allows me to escape into a different world.

And the worst? Time-consuming and very individualistic.

Your best move? Having my children, Jonathan and Katy. But seriously, one of my most memorable chess moves was in a Queen's Gambit where I allowed my opponent to consecutively capture along the long dark-square diagonal with a pawn from e5 to a1.

But less memorable than your worst move? I have made too many bad moves, but my worst experience was playing the Welsh player Sven Zeidler. I blundered horribly in the opening (1 d4 f5 2 ♗g5 h6 3 ♗h4 c5 4 e3 ♕b6 5 d5?? ♕b4+), fought back to a winning position, and then blundered again! At least I received a chocolate chess set from David Norwood for that!

P.Littlewood-S.Zeidler
4NCL, Cardiff 1995



43 ♔e4?? ♖xg4! 0-1

And a highly memorable opponent? Vassily Smyslov.

Favourite game of all time? My win against Tony Miles.

A.Miles-P.Littlewood
England 1984
English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 d3 d6 5 g3 g6 6 ♗g2 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖b1 a5 9 a3 ♖e8 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♕d8 14 b5 ♘e7 15 ♕b3 ♗e6 16 ♘d2 ♖b8 17 ♖a1 c6 18 ♖a7 d5 19 ♖c1 h5 20 ♕a2 h4 21 bxc6 bxc6 22 ♘f3 h3 23 ♗h1 ♘f5 24 ♘d2 ♗h6 25 ♖d1

25...♘e3! 26 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 27 ♔f1 ♕f6+ 28 ♗f3 ♗d4 29 ♖a3 ♗xc3 30 ♖xc3 e4 31 ♕c2 exf3 32 ♘xf3 d4 33 ♖a3 ♗g4 34 ♖a2 ♖e3 35 ♔g1 ♖be8 36 ♖f1 ♗xf3 37 exf3 ♖xf3 38 ♕d1 ♖ee3 39 ♖af2 ♖xf2 40 ♖xf2 ♕e6 41 ♔f1 c5 42 ♕d2 ♕b6 43 ♕d1 ♕b4 44 ♖d2 ♕b7 45 ♔g1 ♖xd3 0-1

The best three chess books: *Zurich Interzonal* by David Bronstein, Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games* and *Think Like a Grandmaster* by Kotov.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I am hopeful for the future with the new regime.

Or your National Federation? I think they are doing their best in difficult circumstances.

Any advice for either? Remember that it is the players who count and it is important to support them.

Can chess make one happy? Absolutely. There is nothing more rewarding than winning a beautiful game.

A tip please for the club player: Follow and develop your own ideas, and read books written by top players such as Fischer, Bronstein and Kasparov.

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Oh, Maggie!

Watch out the record books – Magnus 'Maggie' Carlsen is back to his very best

He was rated 2835 after the world championship match and heading into Wijk aan Zee. Magnus Carlsen's return to form on the windswept Dutch coast saw him finish on '+5' for a gain of 10 rating points; '+5' was also the winning margin at the Gashimov Memorial, which propelled the Norwegian superstar up to 2860 on the live rating list. And had Carlsen stopped? The GRENKE Chess Classic was to give a resounding answer to that naive question: no! In Karlsruhe and then Baden-Baden, the world champion went one better, racking up a huge '+6' to gain 14 rating points and so now top the list at a whopping 2875.

Unsurprisingly Carlsen's dominance in Azerbaijan and then Germany drew comparisons with Garry Kasparov in his pomp. The Norwegian world champion was playing at his very best, arguably for the first time since 2014-15 (readers may recall Magnus's quip during a press conference in London late last year that his favourite player of all time was: "Myself, three or four years ago"), and weren't some of his opponents seemingly quaking with fear and so below their usual level?

In his Editorial last month, our Executive Editor rightly pointed out that it was a case of "Magnus at his fantastic best" at the Gashimov Memorial, partly helped by "The post title-match boost players sometimes have when some of their unseen prep gets the chance to see the light of day." Malcolm went on to explain why it was foolhardy of Giri, Karjakin and Navara to challenge the champ in lines which he had had on the board and clearly prepared in great detail for London.

The face of a 2900? The champ was determined and utterly ruthless at the Gashimov Memorial, his play getting even better by the round, culminating in a positional masterpiece.

The Gashimov Memorial

Amazingly this year's Gashimov Memorial was already the sixth in Shamkir, honouring that extremely talented Azeri Grandmaster, the former world no. 6 Vugar Gashimov (1986-2014). Carlsen had won three of the previous editions; Shakhriyar Mamedyarov the other two. With a field averaging 2780 it didn't look in advance like a walkover for Magnus, but having enjoyed two months' rest since Wijk, he was clearly determined to carry on from where he had left off in the Netherlands.

No doubt wanting to avoid a forced draw in a Sveshnikov, as had occurred in their encounter at Wijk, Carlsen opted for 1...e5 against Teimour Radjabov in the opening round in Shamkir. He even followed up with a fairly early ...f5, but it was to be the super-solid Azeri who was to be on the more comfortable of the draw. The world champion was a little more restrained the next day against his predecessor, but soon had the sort of position he thrives in and once Anand slipped up, a vintage Carlsen grind ensued.

M.Carlsen-V.Anand
Round 2
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗f4 0-0 6 e3 c5 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 ♕c2 ♘c6 9 a3 ♕a5 10 ♖d1 ♖d8 11 ♗e2 ♘e4

The inventor of 11 ♗e2 appears to be the West Midlands' very own Don Mason, who after 11...a6?! 12 0-0 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♖xd1 14 ♖xd1 b5? 15 ♗d3 ♗e7 16 ♘e4 was already doing extremely well in Mason-Tambini, British Championship, Aberystwyth 2014.

12 cxd5

Possibly this was prepared by Team Carlsen during the world championship match, if never deployed there. It attempts to improve over 12 0-0 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 h6 14 a4 ♘e7! 15 ♘e5 ♗d6, which was already quite comfortable for Black in Carlsen-Caruana, 2nd matchgame, London 2018.

12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 exd5 14 0-0 h6 15 a4 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 17 c4 ♗e6

The obvious move, but in the final round in Shamkir, 17...♖b8!? was introduced and after 18 c5 ♖d8 19 ♖d2 ♗e6 20 ♖b1 ♖dc8 Black was rock-solid in Mamedyarov-Karjakin.

18 c5 ♖dd8

Carlsen was still playing quite quickly at this stage; not Anand, who should perhaps have preferred to overprotect b7 with 18...♖d7.

19 ♖b1! ♕c7 20 ♕b2 ♖ab8

The pressure down the b-file grants White a nagging pull, although perhaps Black might have tried 20...♘a5!?, and if 21 ♕c3 ♖ac8 22 ♖fc1 ♘c4 23 ♘d4 ♕e7, aiming to defend more actively than in the game.

21 ♘d4 ♘xd4 22 ♕xd4 b6

Liquidating one of his soft spots, although the other one remains on d5.

23 cxb6 ♖xb6 24 h3

Vintage Carlsen, refusing to rush and creating some luft while leaving Black to worry about where he wants his major pieces to go.

24...♖c8 25 ♖fd1 ♕c3!?

Anand refuses to display any fear. With hindsight one might think of criticising this move, but it would be wrong to overly do so, as the resulting endgame should be drawn. That said, none other than the legendary Indian wasn't happy with the move in the post-game press conference, preferring 25...♕c5! when White isn't going to be getting in a4-a5 after 26 ♕xc5 ♖xc5 and 27 ♖xb6 axb6 28 ♖b1 ♗d7 should just be an easy draw for Black.

26 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 27 a5 ♖xb1 28 ♖xb1

28...♖c5?

Anand was at a loss to explain this move. He didn't want to go passive with 28...♖c7, which actually wouldn't have been too terrible at all, in view of 29 ♖b8+ ♔h7 30 a6 ♗c8, but it was possible to defend actively, as with 28...g5!? 29 ♖b7 (29 ♔f1? ♖a3 30 a6 ♗c8 would not be wise) 29...♖c1+ 30 ♔h2 ♖c2 31 ♗b5 ♖xf2 32 ♖xa7. Here the king might be activated, but Black can also go 32...d4! 33 exd4 ♗d5 when 34 ♔g1 ♖xg2+ 35 ♔f1 ♖a2 36 a6 ♖a5 37 ♗e2 ♔g7 gives him sufficient control over the promotion square on a8 to hold.

29 a6?

This goes unpunished. 29 ♖b8+ ♔h7 30 a6 was the right way to go about things.

29...g6?

Letting Carlsen get back on track. 29...♗c8! would have offered good chances to hold, in view of 30 ♖b8 g6 31 ♗g4 f5 32 ♗f3 ♔g7.

30 ♖b7 ♖c1+ 31 ♔h2 ♖c2 32 ♗b5 ♖b2

Compared to the note to Black's 28th, White can now meet 32...♖xf2 with 33 ♖xa7 d4 34 exd4 ♗d5 35 ♔g3!, exploiting the black pawn being on g6, not g5, to activate his king with decisive effect.

33 ♔g3 ♗c8 34 ♖b8!

Liquidating to a winning rook endgame.

34...♔g7 35 ♖xc8 ♖xb5 36 ♖c7 ♖a5 37 ♖xa7 ♔f6

White's king is already extremely active after 37...d4!? 38 exd4 ♖d5 39 ♔f4 ♖xd4+ 40 ♔e5 ♖a4, but Anand might still have tried this had he seen coming the regrouping Carlsen now deploys.

38 ♖a8 ♖a3 39 ♔h2!

This might appear to be a case of putting the king back into the box, but Carlsen wants to keep Black's counterplay under control, not allow 39 a7? d4! 40 ♔f3 dxe3 41 fxe3 h5 when White's winning task would be problematic, if indeed it is possible at all.

39...h5 40 a7 ♖a2 41 h4 ♔f5 42 f3 ♖a1 43 g3 ♖a2+ 44 ♔g1 ♔f6 45 ♔f1 ♔g7 46 ♔e1

With Black devoid of counterplay, Carlsen knows the textbook method: bring the king to b1 and then up the board to win d5, after which the kingside majority will prove decisive.

46...♔f6 47 ♔d1 ♔g7 48 ♔c1 ♔f6 49 ♔b1 ♖a5 50 ♔b2 ♔g7 51 ♔c3 ♔f6 52 ♔d4 ♔g7 53 ♔e5 1-0

David Navara's preparation for the Pelikan failed to convince, finding himself forced to ditch the exchange as early as move 20 as White, and so Carlsen moved to 2½/3, a lead of half a point over Sergey Karjakin and Ding Liren. Were his remaining opponents also going to make matters a little easier for him than they might have?

Kudos, if that really is the right term, to Veselin Topalov for quickly hoovering all the pieces on the white side of a Ragozin in round 4, before Mamedyarov also displayed decent preparation ahead of activating at just the right time to hold fairly easily on the black side of an ...a6 Slav. Then came round 6 and after their encounter at last year's European Club Cup, the world champion is fully aware of the strength of Ding Liren and was happy to put up the shutters against the world no. 3.

On 4/6 it didn't appear as if Carlsen was strolling to victory in Shamkir and, indeed, he only found himself level at the top of the standings with Karjakin. However, then, as all great players can do, he went up a gear, turning the screw at just the right moment. Kick-starting a most impressive closing burst of 3/3 was a demolition job done on Carlsen's favourite sparring partner on Twitter, Anish Giri.

M.Carlsen-A.Giri

Round 7

English Opening

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♗c5 7 0-0 0-0 8 d3 h6

Deviating from 8...♖e8, as Caruana upheld in London, but it safe to say that Team Carlsen would have closely scrutinised Black's alternatives too.

9 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 10 a3 a5 11 ♗d2 ♕e6 12 ♖c1

Only outwardly modest development from White, who is planning on obtaining both decent central control and the initiative, which isn't such a surprise considering the strangely placed black queen.

12...♕e7 13 ♗c3 ♘d4?!

This only serves to activate White's forces. After 13...a4 14 ♘d2 ♗g4 Black would have obtained some counterplay and quite possibly not have been doing so badly, since 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♕c2 ♖fb8 17 ♘e4 ♗d6 leaves b2 as vulnerable as c6.

14 e3! ♘xf3+ 15 ♕xf3 ♗d6 16 ♕h5 c6

White's diagonal-moving pieces have all found good squares, but can you guess what Carlsen did next?

17 f4!!

Pure genius. Of the great players of all time, one might imagine Lasker playing this as it would quite possibly be the last move Black was expecting, as well as such fearless masters of the initiative as Alekhine, Spassky, Tal and Kasparov.

17...exf4?

With hindsight it was decided that Black should have elected not to test the pudding, but to have kept lines closed with 17...f5!. After 18 ♖ce1 ♗d7 19 e4 (19 fxe5 ♗xe5 20 d4 ♗c7 21 e4 fxe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖xf1+ 23 ♖xf1 ♖f8 is also fine for Black) 19...exf4 20 gxf4 (20 e5? fails to 20...♗xa3! 21 bxa3 ♕c5+ and 22...♕xc3) 20...♕f7 Black can keep White's central pawns in check and so is OK.

18 gxf4 ♕xe3+

Only this is criticised by the engines, but Giri undoubtedly didn't exchange on f4 just to allow White a mobile pawn roller after 18...♔h7 19 e4.

19 ♔h1 ♖d8

Black's light-squared bishop is short of a good square and Giri was no doubt rather concerned by 19...♗d7 20 ♖g1 when the one route approach does, indeed, appear

pretty strong: 20...f6 21 ♗e4 ♖f7 22 ♖ce1! ♕xf4 23 ♖ef1 ♕e3 24 ♕g6 with a huge attack, since 24...♔f8 fails to 25 ♗xf6! ♖xf6 26 ♖xf6+ gxf6 27 ♕g8+ ♔e7 28 ♖g7#.

20 ♖ce1 ♕c5 21 f5!

A Kasparovian bridgehead, cutting off the black pieces from the defence of their king.

21...♗f8 22 ♗e4 ♖d5

Already there was nothing better, but naturally Carlsen had no wish to trade his mighty bishop on e4 for the rook.

23 ♖f3 b5 24 ♖g1 ♖a7 25 ♗f6

Avoiding 25 ♖fg3 f6, although here (25...♗xf5 26 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 27 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 28 ♕xh6 is a killer) 26 ♕xh6 ♖f7 27 ♗xf6 is a rather simple breakthrough.

25...g6 26 ♕h3

Carlsen is in no rush. The engines point out 26 ♖xg6+! fxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 28 ♗c3 when 29 f6 will clean Black up.

26...♖d6

27 ♕h4

I dare say Carlsen was enjoying toying with his opponent, cat and mouse style. That said, by now a forced win wasn't so easy to spot, although it existed in 27 d4! ♖xd4 (27...♕c4 28 ♗e5 makes it too easy for White) 28 fxg6!! when White's impressive concept beginning with 17 f4 would have been crowned with a hail of gold coins: 28...♗xh3 (or 28...♖xe4 29 ♕xc8 fxg6 30 ♗c3 and all the open lines prove fatal) 29 gxf7+ ♔xf7 30 ♗xd4+ ♔e8 31 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 32 ♖g8+ ♔e7 33 ♖g7+ ♔d6 34 ♖xa7 ♗xa7 35 ♖xh3 and White emerges a rook to the good.

27...♖xf6!

Giri seizes his only chance, removing a highly dangerous attacker.

28 ♕xf6 ♗e7

Ding Liren was second best in Shamkir, but that was still some two points behind. The Chinese no.1 likely regretted not putting any real pressure on Carlsen and Giri with the white pieces.

Continuing to resist, and not 28...g5? 29 ♕d8 ♗d7 30 ♖xg5+! hxg5 31 ♕xg5+ ♗g7 32 ♖g3.

29 ♕xc6 ♕xc6 30 ♗xc6

White has been forced to remove the queens, but he is the exchange ahead and with Giri also extremely low on time, Carlsen now made no mistake:

30...♔g7 31 fxg6 fxg6 32 d4 a4 33 d5 b4? 34 ♗e8! ♗g5 35 h4 ♗xh4 36 ♖xg6+ ♔h7 37 ♖c6 ♗g4 38 ♖f4 ♖g7 1-0

In the penultimate round it was the turn of Sergey Karjakin to be taken well and truly to the cleaners, as we saw in last month's Editorial, before Carlsen reached '+5' with a model exploitation of the bishop-pair against Alexander Grischuk to wrap up victory and for a truly amazing TPR of 2990!

M.Carlsen-A.Grischuk
Round 9
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 d3 ♗c5 5 c3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♗a4!?

Fairly clever prophylaxis, especially against the typical knight regrouping Grischuk now deploys.

7...♘e7 8 ♗c2

This natural move was actually a novelty. It makes good sense to overprotect e4 so that White can get in his ideal central break and not allow Black a free hand to build up on the kingside.

8...♘g6 9 d4 ♗b6 10 a4 c6 11 dxe5

Carlsen plays for a typical micro-edge.

11...♘xe5

Grischuk was no doubt worried about his knight on g6 after 11...dxe5 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8, but 13 a5 (White can also try 13 ♗g5 ♗e6 14 ♘bd2 ♗c7 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 g3, but this leaves Black with the bishop-pair and counter-play after 16...b5) 13...♗c7 14 ♘bd2 ♘f4! activates it and seems fine for Black.

12 ♘xe5 dxe5 13 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 14 a5 ♗c5 15 ♘d2 ♗e6 16 ♖e1 b5?!

Initially engine-approved and played to take control of c4, but incorrect. Grischuk later reflected that he "Just made one very bad move", and this was it.

Black might have regrouped his knight towards c5 or f8, heading for e6, with 16...♘d7, or held White up on the queenside with 16...a6.

17 ♘b3! ♗xb3

Going for active-looking counterplay, rather than allow 17...♗e7 18 a6 followed by ♗e3 with long-term pressure against Black's queenside.

18 ♗xb3 ♘g4

Black could hardly dally with White set to tidy with g2-g3 and ♔g2, but perhaps he should have flicked in 18...♖ab8!?, introducing ideas of ...b4, as well as ...♘g4.

19 ♖e2 ♖d6 20 ♗g5!

A key resource Carlsen had to have seen back at move 17. Black's rook won't now reach f6 and White is able to complete his development.

20...♔f8 21 ♖f1 ♘f6

Meek. Black faced torture no matter what he did, but 21...h6 22 ♗c1 ♖b8!? 23 h3 ♘f6 24 g3 b4 was still quite possibly a better idea, obtaining a bit of counterplay while making

use of the well-placed rook on d6.

22 g3

Carlsen begins to tidy as the masterclass moves into phase two.

22...a6 23 ♔g2 ♘d7 24 ♗c1!

Placing the bishop back inside the pawn skeleton ahead of expansion.

24...♗a7 25 f4 f6 26 h4 ♖e8

Grischuk does his best to sit tight in a grim position, but now White is able to annex further space.

27 h5 h6 28 ♗a2

Note the A*lphaZero*esque location of White's two rook pawns and now, after Grischuk wrongly attempts to get in ...c6-c5-c4, Carlsen comes up with just the sort of pawn sacrifice the 'Wizard of AI' kept on astonishing the world with during its match with *Stockfish*.

28...c5? 29 ♗e3!! exf4 30 gxf4 ♖xe4

Bagging a pawn, but only at the cost of opening further avenues for White's unopposed light-squared bishop.

31 ♗b1

Veselin Topalov looks puzzled to be substituted in the traditional football match on the rest day during the Gashimov Memorial and observe too the FIDE President on Topalov's left.

Very natural and hardly bad, but 31 ♖fe1! ♖e7 32 ♔f1! would have been even stronger. White threatens 33 ♗xc5! now that ...♖xe2 isn't check and 32...♖c6 33 ♗b1 ♘b8 34 ♗f5 leaves Black rapidly running out of space and moves.

31...♖e7 32 ♖fe1 f5?

Desperation. Remarkably 32...♘b8! 33 ♔f3 ♘c6 (improving the worst-placed piece) would have held on for now. After 34 ♗f2 ♖xe2 35 ♖xe2 ♘e7 (35...♘xa5 runs into 36 ♗g6 ♖d8 37 ♖e6 ♘c4 38 ♖xa6) 36 ♗g6!? Black's king and overall position remain serious causes for concern, but White is far from winning just yet.

33 ♗xf5 ♘f6 34 ♔f3 ♘d5

Walking into a strong pin, but 34...♖d5 35 ♗c8 ♖d6 36 ♖d2! ♖xd2 37 ♗xd2 ♖xe1 38 ♗xe1 would only have been a slightly slower death with a6 falling, just as it soon does in the game.

35 ♖d2 ♖d8 36 ♗e4 ♖ed7 37 ♖ed1 ♘f6 38 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 39 ♖d6 ♔e7 40 ♖xa6 ♗b8 41 ♖g6 ♔f8 42 a6 1-0

On to Germany!

After a 10-day break, the ever-popular circus which is the elite of the chess world arrived in Karlsruhe, in the south-west of Germany, for the GRENKE Chess Classic. The world champion's opening pairing generated even more headlines than usual, as Carlsen had Black against 14-year-old *wunderkind* Vincent Keymer. That he was after a win was clear, a rather old-fashioned handling of the Benoni being followed up by exchanging Black's pride and joy to double White's pawns on c3.

One of Keymer's main strengths is that he doesn't panic, no matter who the opposition. Soon he was even in the driving seat, expanding on the kingside with two bishops against two knights. However, he was too slow to exploit his trumps, instead incorrectly centralising his king, which gave Carlsen the time he needed to seize control, the 350-point Elo favourite eventually grinding out the win in 81 moves after further adventures.

Carlsen also didn't look at his best in round 2, but still made the ending of rook, knight and three pawns each with opposite-coloured bishops look like a forced win against Francisco Vallejo Pons. The Norwegian superstar coordinated his forces much the better, ahead of making the pawnless ending of rook against knight with opposite bishops look much easier than one might have imagined, as he wrapped up the win on just move 73.

Two wins and both with the black pieces was the perfect start, but with all due respect

Vugar Gashimov Memorial, Shamkir, Azerbaijan, 30th March - 9th April (Category 22, average rating = 2778 Elo)

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2845	*	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	7	2990
2	Ding Liren	CHN	2812	½	*	½	½	1	½	1	0	½	½	5	2817
3	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2753	0	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	5	2824
4	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2756	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	4½	2780
5	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2771	0	0	½	½	*	½	1	1	½	½	4½	2779
6	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2779	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	4½	2778
7	Veselin Topalov	BUL	2740	½	0	½	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	4	2739
8	David Navara	CZE	2739	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	4	2739
9	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2790	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	*	½	3½	2696
10	Anish Giri	NED	2797	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	3	2651

Georg Meier is a very solid and correct player, who even defeating Vishy Anand with his favourite French Rubinstein at GRENKE, but he had no answer to Carlsen's unbalancing strategy.

to the Spanish no.1, sterner tests lay in store for Carlsen. In the third round he once again made good use of the English to build up a huge position against Vishy Anand, but was unable to quite break Black's resolute defence. Was this really Carlsen at his best, the same vintage Carlsen that had finished so strongly in Azerbaijan?

Fabiano Caruana repeated 7 ♘d5 against Carlsen's Pelikan in the fourth round, introducing a novelty on move 14. Perhaps White was a tiny bit better, but once again the resulting dynamic if positional struggle appeared to play more to Carlsen's strengths than those of the world no.2, who landed up in a worse endgame where he had to bail out into rook against rook and knight.

Carlsen tried a different brand of the English in round 5 (1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 ♗b4 5 ♘d5, as opposed to the 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e4!? he had introduced in the play-off in London and repeated against Anand), but never really got anywhere against Arkadij Naiditsch, who held fairly comfortably the resulting rook endgame.

Having averaged 70 moves thus far, even as fit and young a world champion as Carlsen must have enjoyed the rest day, even if it did involve moving 30 miles south as the GRENKE Chess Classic relocated to Baden-Baden for its concluding half. The world champion shared the lead with Anand on 3½/5, but his play was far from its smooth best, as seen in Shamkir. Sometimes, though, all one needs is a little luck and Caissa shined on Magnus in round 6 as Georg Meier failed to take his defensive chances.

G.Meier-M.Carlsen
Round 6
g3 anti-King's Indian

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 0-0 0-0 5 d4 d6 6 b3 b5!?

An ambitious move, setting a little trap: 7 ♘e5? dxe5 8 dxe5 (or 8 ♗xa8 c6 9 dxe5 ♘d5) 8...♘fd7 9 ♗xa8 c6 traps the bishop and favours Black.

7 ♗b2 ♗b7 8 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 9 c4 bxc4 10 ♘xc4 a5 11 ♖c1 c5

Note how Carlsen is swift to begin queenside counterplay and to chip away at White's central control. Black is already comfortably placed.

12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 ♗d4 ♘cd7

Keeping pieces on ahead of deploying the major pieces, most likely with ...♕b8 and ...♖fc8.

14 a4?! ♖a6! 15 ♘a3 ♕a8 16 ♘b5 ♖c6!

An harmonious and impressive queenside regrouping from Black. As Carlsen would later remark, "The knight is not as great on b5 as it looked."

17 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♘e1 ♗xg2 19 ♘xg2 ♖c8 20 ♘a7 ♖d8 21 ♕c2?

Now Black is able to realise the dynamic potential in his set-up by advancing and taking over the centre. 21 ♘b5 would have been meek and surely not met with a repetition, but would also have kept Black's pawns in check, in view of 21...e5 22 ♗c3 ♘e4 (22...d5?! 23 ♘c7 ♕c6 24 ♗xa5 offers Black some compensation, of course, but probably not quite enough for his pawn) 23 ♗e1 ♘b6 (not 23...d5? 24 ♘c7) 24 ♘c7 ♕c6 25 ♘b5 when White seems to be OK.

21...e5 22 ♗e3 d5! 23 ♘c6 ♖e8 24 ♗d2

Meier was relying on this attack on a5 and the fact that 24...♖c8 is impossible; Carlsen, as ever, had seen deeper into the position.

24...♘e4

25 ♘xa5

25 ♗xa5? ♖e6 26 ♘d8 ♕xa5 27 ♘xe6 fxe6 28 ♕c6 ♘f8 would only have favoured Black somewhat with his strong centre and two minor pieces for the rook, but White might have tried 25 ♗e1!? ♗f8 26 ♘e3 ♘df6 27 ♘xa5 ♖c8 when Black has plenty of compensation, but isn't doing as well as in the game.

25...♖c8 26 ♕a2

Now the knight on a5 becomes a major headache for White, but he would also have been under heavy pressure after 26 ♕b2 ♗f8 27 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 28 ♕xc1 ♕a6.

26...♘df6 27 ♗e1 ♘c3 28 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 29 b4 ♗f8

Hardly bad, but unusually Carlsen fails to fully seize his chance: 29...d4! followed by ...♘d5 would leave Black doing extremely well.

30 ♕b2 d4

31 e3?

Returning the favour, and more. Instead, 31 ♘e3! ♕c8! 32 ♘ac4 (32 ♘ec4? ♕h3! 33 ♘xe5 ♗d6 34 ♘f3 ♘g4 is highly instructive and decisive; the threats of ...♗e5 followed by ...d3 and the brutal ...♘xh2; ♘xh2 ♗xg3 prove deadly) 32...♕e6! (and not 32...♖xc4? 33 ♘xc4 ♕xc4 34 b5! when the b-pawn is pretty quick) 33 ♘d2! (there's no time for 33 f3? on account of 33...♗h6) 33...♕h3 34 ♘f3 would have continued to resist. Black does have 34...e4 (34...♖xe3!? is also tempting and probably stronger, hoping for 35 fxe3? ♗h6, but 35 ♘g5 ♕f5 36 fxe3

♕xg5 37 ♕b3 fights on), but after 35 ♘g5 ♕h5 36 ♕d2 ♕xg5 37 ♕xd4 White has survived on the kingside and his queenside connected passed pawns should fully compensate for the piece.

31...♘e4 32 exd4 exd4 33 ♘b3 d3 34 ♖c1 ♖xc1+?

Not the move of a player at the height of his powers, but Carlsen would later admit to being tired and even to missing 34...♗xb4, which would just have been crushing, and if 35 ♖xc3 (or 35 ♖d1 ♖c2) 35...♗xc3 36 ♕b1 d2 37 ♕d1 ♘g5, forcing resignation.

35 ♕xc1 ♕xa4 36 ♕c4 ♘c5 37 ♘d2!

Meier finds the only way to defend, covering his back rank as well as he can.

37...♕a1+ 38 ♘f1 d2 39 ♘ge3 ♘e6 40 ♕b3 ♕e1 41 ♔g2 ♗xb4!

42 ♕b2

White is eventually ground down after this, but of course if 42 ♕xb4? d1♕ 43 ♕b8+ ♕d8.

42...h5 43 h4 ♗a5 44 ♕b8+ ♘f8 45 ♕a8 ♗c3 46 ♕c6 ♕c1 47 ♕d5 ♘e6 48 ♕c4 ♗a5 49 ♕d5 ♗b4 50 ♕b5 ♕c3 51 ♕d5 ♕c1 52 ♕b5 ♗c3 53 ♕a4 ♗d4 54 ♘d1 ♔g7 55 ♔f3

A strange move, until one sees White's next. The onus would still have been on Black to break the blockade and/or open a second front on the kingside after 55 ♕b3.

55...♗f6 56 ♔e2?

Meier's idea, but it's not a good one.

56...♘d4+ 57 ♔d3 ♕b1+! 58 ♔xd2

Unsurprisingly Black's threats prove far, far too strong after this, but so would they after 58 ♔e3 ♕f5 59 ♘xd2 ♗e5 60 ♕c4 ♕g4.

58...♕e4 0-1

A win can do wonders for anyone's well-being, even Carlsen, who utterly destroyed Levon Aronian the next day, as we've already seen in this month's Editorial. It was then Peter Svidler's turn to look somewhat below his normal self.

P.Svidler-M.Carlsen
Round 8
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 e5 4 ♗c4 ♗e7 5 d3 d6 6 ♘d2 ♘f6 7 ♘f1 ♘d7 8 ♘d5 ♘b6 9 ♘xb6 axb6 10 c3 0-0 11 ♘e3 ♗g5 12 0-0 ♔h8!?

White has his grip on d5, but Black is OK after both the ambitious text and the 12...♗xe3 13 ♗xe3 ♕e7 of Leko-Kramnik, Dortmund 2003.

13 a3 f5!

Svidler would admit to not expecting this break straightaway, but why shouldn't Black want to expand in the centre as per the game?

14 ♘xf5 ♗xc1 15 ♖xc1 ♗xf5 16 exf5 d5 17 ♗a2 ♖xf5 18 ♕g4 ♖f6

19 f4?!

Svidler didn't like his entombed bishop and Black's enormous centre, but this wasn't the right way to try and deal with both issues. After the calm 19 ♕h5 White should be almost OK, since 19...♕d6 20 f4 (now that the black queen is on d6) 20...♖af8 (20...exf4?! 21 ♕xd5 ♕f8 leaves White a whole tempo up on the game) 21 fxe5 ♘xe5 22 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 23 ♕e2 should be tenable for him.

19...exf4! 20 ♕g5

The follow-up Svidler had been relying on, and not 20 ♖xf4? ♘e5 21 ♕g3 ♖xf4 22 ♕xf4 ♘xd3.

20...♕f8!

But this he'd missed. White will succeed in breaking up the black centre and in freeing his bishop, but only at the cost of the initiative and an exposed king.

21 ♕xd5 ♖d8 22 ♕f3?

Matters were already bad; now they become very bad. White needed to find 22 ♕g5!, and if 22...♖xd3 23 ♖ce1 when his pieces make sense and he might even have enough for the pawn.

22...♘e5 23 ♕e4

23 ♕e2 ♘xd3 24 ♖cd1 c4! exploits a little tactic to decisively cement the octopus knight in place.

23...♘g4 24 ♖ce1 ♘e3 25 ♖f2 ♖e8!

The queenside doesn't matter. With such a knight entrenched on e3, Black needs to open the kingside to prevail.

26 ♕xb7 g5 27 ♖fe2?

Hardly the stoutest defence and Svidler would later admit that this was "Difficult to explain."

27...g4 28 ♖f2 ♕h6 29 ♕c7 ♖ef8

The storm clouds have well and truly gathered over the white monarch. The deadly threat is 30...g3 31 hxg3 ♘g4. Svidler prefers to go down with all guns blazing.

30 h3 gxh3 31 g3 fxg3! 32 ♖xf6

True to what he preaches whenever commentating, Svidler allows Carlsen a neat mate.

32...h2+ 33 ♔h1 g2# 0-1

Carlsen completed a whopping 4/4 finishing streak by completely outplaying Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Displaying fine practical cunning, Carlsen allowed MVL, true to style, to sacrifice a pawn with **1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♗g2 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 d6 6 0-0 ♗f5 7 h3 ♘f6 8 d3 0-0 9 ♗e3 a6 10 ♕d2 b5?**, having realised that after **11 cxb5 axb5 12 ♘xb5 ♕a5 13 ♘c3 ♖ab8 14 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 15 b3** Black's compensation is virtually non-existent, White winning in 43 moves.

Did They Crumble?

It would be hard for the field at GRENKE not to have been fearful when studying Carlsen's victories in Shamkir, not least those dominant ones towards the end of the tournament. And yet early on in Germany, the world champion's opponents did not crumble. It was only in the final three rounds that we might ascribe such a term to the play of Aronian, Svidler and Vachier-Lagrave, but to solely do so would be to miss the point that Carlsen is a chess-playing monster, one always out for the maximum.

By the seventh round in Germany none of Aronian, Svidler and Vachier-Lagrave could have been said to have been having stellar tournaments, even if their play had been far from shabby. Carlsen can smell tiredness and mediocrity a mile away, even when that mediocrity is at a 2750 or so level, and in those closing rounds in Germany it was largely his will to win, as well as correct play, which kept on bagging the full point.

Is 2900 in Sight?

Carlsen's record rating is 2882, set back in 2014 when he was a dominating world champion at the top of his game, not a 'first amongst almost equals', as has been much more the case in recent years, reminding one of the state of play at the top of the chess world in the late sixties, as chronicled so well by John Saunders in our May issue.

One would not bet against Carlsen leaping from his current impressive rating of 2875 to a new record in the upcoming super-tournaments in Norway and Zagreb. He wouldn't even need a particularly large plus score at both to do so, but might the magic 2900 barrier even be in sight?

We can't expect Carlsen to be at his very best in every tournament, particularly when they are almost back to back, as was the case in April. However, when fresh this is a world champion very much still at the height of his powers, as well as one utterly determined to strive for the maximum and a Carlsen who has most certainly fully regained his mojo.

And what does the man himself think about the big question: "I don't know. Right now I am just happy to be playing a lot better than I have. Frankly, some people have asked me privately over the last few years whether I'd ever get over 2900 and my answer has always been a pretty resounding 'No, I don't think I'm gonna get there.' I still don't particularly think so, but now it's at least a half-attainable goal. It's something I will be looking at. But most of all it's about continuing the process of playing well."

It would be a brave man who would bet against the world champion breaking the 2900 barrier this year and he will surely do so unless the opposition get their act together. Who knows, for instance, how a player who has amassed +16 = 15 -0 and not lost a classical game since to Mamedyarov at Biel last July would suddenly react to a defeat. Perhaps if more of Carlsen's opponents imitate him in choosing psychologically uncomfortable openings for their opponents and then really strive for the win, including against the Norwegian himself, rather than test the champ's world championship preparation or simply put up the shutters as White, we might find out.

Best of the Rest

The rest, they were a long way behind. Only two other players finished on a plus score in Shamkir and that was but '+1', Ding Liren and Sergey Karjakin. Carlsen has long had the number of the latter, whose emphasis remains on being as hard to beat as possible, but the former currently looks as likely as anyone to challenge the champ. In Shamkir Ding was largely unafraid to strive for a win. His best game was a long encounter with Grischuk, marked by a deep positional exchange sacrifice from the Chinese star, while he also showed that he can win, Carlsen style, by converting just rook against knight no less against Topalov.

Ding is at times a fearless calculator, but his opening repertoire, while deeply impressive in many places, is not quite fully there. David Navara would display deeper knowledge of the Meran to defeat him and Ding's failure to at least reach as White an unbalanced position in the final round against tail-ender Giri must also count as a disappointment.

As at Wijk aan Zee, the Shakhriyar Mamedyarov of 2018 was unrecognisable, things simply not working for the crowd favourite in Shamkir. Anish Giri must also have departed the Gashimov Memorial feeling rather disappointed, if also motivated, as we'll see in this month's *Overseas News*. How different, though, might have been his fortunes and those of Karjakin had Giri seized an early chance.

Arkadij Naiditsch would go on to lose this game to Peter Svidler, but the former German no.1, who now plays for Azerbaijan, could be delighted with his third place on tiebreak.

A.Giri-S.Karjakin
Round 2
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d3 d6 6 0-0 a6 7 a4 h6 8 ♖e1 0-0 9 h3

White also has 9 b4 ♗a7 10 h3, when Black tends to either develop with 10...♗e6 or regroup with 10...♘e7 and 11...♘g6.

9...a5!?

Karjakin had deployed this rare move before, acquiescing to the loss of a tempo to rule out b2-b4 once and for all, but only in rapid and blitz games.

10 d4!

In those he generally faced 10 ♘bd2 ♗e6 11 ♗b5 ♘a7 12 d4, but Giri prefers to break in the centre straight away.

10...♗a7

It's never easy to know where to place this bishop. 10...♗b6 is also possible, although then the bishop will have to move again should White land a knight on c4.

11 ♗b3 ♖e8 12 ♗c2 ♗d7 13 ♘a3

On a7 too, the bishop can be harassed.

13...♕c8

13...exd4!? 14 cxd4 ♘b4 would have been more challenging, exploiting the absence of White's queen's knight from d2 to attack e4 with 15 ♗b1 ♗c6.

14 ♘b5 ♗b6 15 ♗b1!

Further refined prophylaxis from Giri, ensuring that Black's 16th won't come with tempo.

15...exd4

How else to obtain counterplay with 15...♗xh3? 16 gxh3 ♕xh3 easily rebuffed by 17 ♘h2?

16 cxd4 ♘b4 17 ♖a3!

If you thought that White's bishop was a problem on b1, think again! His pieces are now most harmoniously placed and already a powerful attack against the black king is in the offing.

17...♖e7 18 e5 dxe5 19 dxe5 ♘fd5

It's all been one-way traffic thus far, but here Giri missed a powerful blow: 20 ♗xh6!! gxh6 21 ♘h4 would have ripped open the black kingside with near decisive effect. For example, 21...♖e6 (21...♕e8 can now be met by 22 ♖g3+ ♔h8 23 ♕h5, and if 23...♖e6 24 ♕g4 ♕f8 25 ♕f5) 22 ♖g3+ ♔h8 23 ♕h5 ♕f8 24 ♕f5 ♘f6 25 ♖f1! and Black is forced to return the piece under most unfavourable circumstances in view of 25...♖c6 26 ♕f3 ♘h7 27 ♕e4.

20 ♘h4? ♕e8!

True to character, it's Karjakin's turn to impress on the prophylactic front while making this fine defensive manoeuvre.

21 ♕e2

Black's first point is that 21 ♖g3? can be met by 21...♖xe5; his second 21 ♕h5 ♘f6. Nevertheless, White might still have tried this and then 22 ♕e2 ♖d8 23 ♗f4, still with some hope of landing a blow on the kingside.

21...♘c6 22 ♘f3

This feels retrograde and slow, but 22 ♗xh6 would only have sufficed for a draw after 22...♖xe5 23 ♖g3! ♖xe2 24 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25 ♖h7+ ♔g8 26 ♖g7+.

22...♖d8 23 ♔h2?

Giri is fast losing the thread. There would have remained everything to play for after 23 ♘c3 ♘xc3 24 bxc3.

23...f5!

Exploiting the pin on the e-file to close lines. By now Black is slightly for choice, Karjakin having realised that White's tempting next simply doesn't work.

24 g4? fxg4 25 ♕d3 g6?

This might have let White off the hook, whereas 25...♕f7 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 would have left Black well on top, since his queen can always slide back to g8 if needs be.

26 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 27 ♕e4 gxf3 28 ♖g1?

Too slow, once again. Instead, the board would have been well and truly on fire after 28 ♕h4! ♗d5 29 ♗xh6 ♘xe5 30 ♘c3 when 30...♗xf2! 31 ♕xf2 ♘g4+ 32 hxg4 ♖xe1 33 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 remains extremely unclear to the human eye, if highly likely to end in perpetual check to the silicon one, as after 34 ♖e3 ♖xe3 35 ♗xe3 ♕e5+ 36 ♔h3 ♖d1 37 ♗a2+ ♔g7 38 ♕xf3 ♖h1+! 39 ♕xh1 ♕xe3+.

28...♗f7 29 ♗a2?

White was in trouble anyhow, but deflecting the black bishop won't help with his own king also potentially extremely exposed.

14-year-old Vincent Keymer won the Open at the 2018 GRENKE Chess Classic to qualify for this year's elite event. He didn't look out of place, outplaying Carlsen and Caruana for a while.

29...♗xa2! 30 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 31 ♕xg6+ ♖g7 32 ♕xg7+

White now finds himself fatally tied up, but of course 32 ♕xh6 would have been met by 32...♖g2+ 33 ♔h1 ♖d1#.

32...♔xg7 33 ♖xa2 ♖d1 34 ♖a1

Giri's plight is summed up by this sub-optimal move, the rook retreating further from that once grand post on a3, with its tail well and truly between its legs.

34...♔f7 0-1

In Germany, it would be hard to fault too much the play of the defending GRENKE Classic Champion, Fabiano Caruana. He moved swiftly to simplify when drifting into trouble against Carlsen and finished on a hardly shabby '+3'. We probably just have to accept that Caruana is Carlsen's inferior, even if given the right conditions he can push the world champion to the brink.

The U.S. no.1 defeated Keymer, Naiditsch and Meier, but it was the first of those victories which really stood out – for the wrong reasons. Defeating anyone as Black these days is never easy, even for the elite, but in a tense middlegame where White had challenged Black's pawns on c5 and d5 with b2-b4 (White also having a pawn on d4), Caruana was too quick to release the tension with ...c4, allowing White a free hand on the kingside, which the talented young German will regret not exploiting rather than collapsing in the time scramble.

Caruana almost always takes his chances when they are there, but creating positions in which his opponents will err is an area in which he remains far behind Carlsen. Events in Karlsruhe and Baden-Baden showed that he has learnt that the Sveshnikov is a good opening, even adopting it as Black, but if Caruana is to improve again, he may need to widen his white repertoire beyond 1 e4 much more and become a little more savvy in his choice of lines, à la Carlsen.

In both recent super-tournaments, Vishy Anand showed that he can very much still mix it with the best, but unfortunately his play is

usually too inconsistent these days to enable him to challenge for the top spot. At the other end of the age scale, Vincent Keymer's day is yet to come. Peter Leko's pupil showed that he very much belonged at GRENKE, where with more experience he might well have finished on 3 or even 4/9. Like with Nodirbek Abdusattorov, Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa and Nihal Sarin, do keep an eye out for the rise of Keymer.

Finally, while he isn't strong or stable enough to challenge the world's very best throughout a tournament, Arkadij Naiditsch once again did his best to light up proceedings in Germany, battling hard throughout and being rewarded with third place for his often fearless play.

A.Naiditsch-V.Keymer
Round 4

With such a preponderance of force gathered on the kingside, it was clearly time to break through.

21 f5! ♘cxe5

Black would prefer not to have his bishop stuck on h4, but it also a good defender and 21...g5!? 22 ♘h5 ♘cxe5 very much came into consideration too.

22 ♗xh6 ♖fe8

And here 22...♔h7!? 23 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 would have been a radical, but decent enough idea to shore up the defence.

23 fxg6 fxg6 24 g5 ♘f7?

Now the bishop proves a problem after all for Black. As such, he should have gone 24...♗xg3+ 25 ♘xg3 c4! (25...♘f7 26 ♘e2! switches the target to g6) 26 dxc4 (26 bxc4 dxc4 27 ♘e4 cxd3 28 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 29 gxf6 ♕c7 is most unclear) 26...dxc4 27 ♖d1 cxb3 28 cxb3 ♘c5, with definite counterplay.

25 ♕f4

25...♘xh6

Another neat line runs 25...♘xg5 26 ♘h5! when 26...gxh5? 27 ♕xh4 ♘f3+ 28 ♗xf3+ comes with check and 26...♖f8 27 ♕xh4! ♘f3+ 28 ♗xf3 ♕xh4 29 ♖xg6+ ♔h7 30 ♗g5 regains the queen and wins. Black's position would also have been far too open in the event of 25...♗xg5 26 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 27 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 28 ♗xg5, but 25...♗xg3+!? 26 ♕xg3 ♕d6 was well worth considering, and if 27 ♘f4 c4, aiming for counterplay while White extricates or tries to make use of his bishop on h6.

26 ♕xh4 ♘f7 27 ♘h5!

There was nothing wrong with 27 ♘f4 ♕xg5 28 ♕xg5 ♘xg5 followed by clearing the g-file beginning with 29 ♘ge2, but Naiditsch finds a much more aesthetic method.

27...gxh5

The best defence, as can be seen from 27...♕xg5 28 ♕xg5 ♘xg5 29 ♗h1! when the open g-file proves decisive, and if 27...♘xg5 28 ♗e4! ♘f3+ 29 ♖xf3 ♕xh4 30 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♖h6+.

28 ♖f6!

The sacrifices just keep on coming and now either h5 will fall or Black can try to run.

28...♘xf6 29 gxf6 ♕d6+ 30 ♘f4 ♔f8 31 ♕g3 ♖ed8 32 ♖e1

Even if it can reach the e-file, the black king will be far from safe.

32...e5 33 ♘g6+ ♔e8 34 ♘xe5 ♕xf6

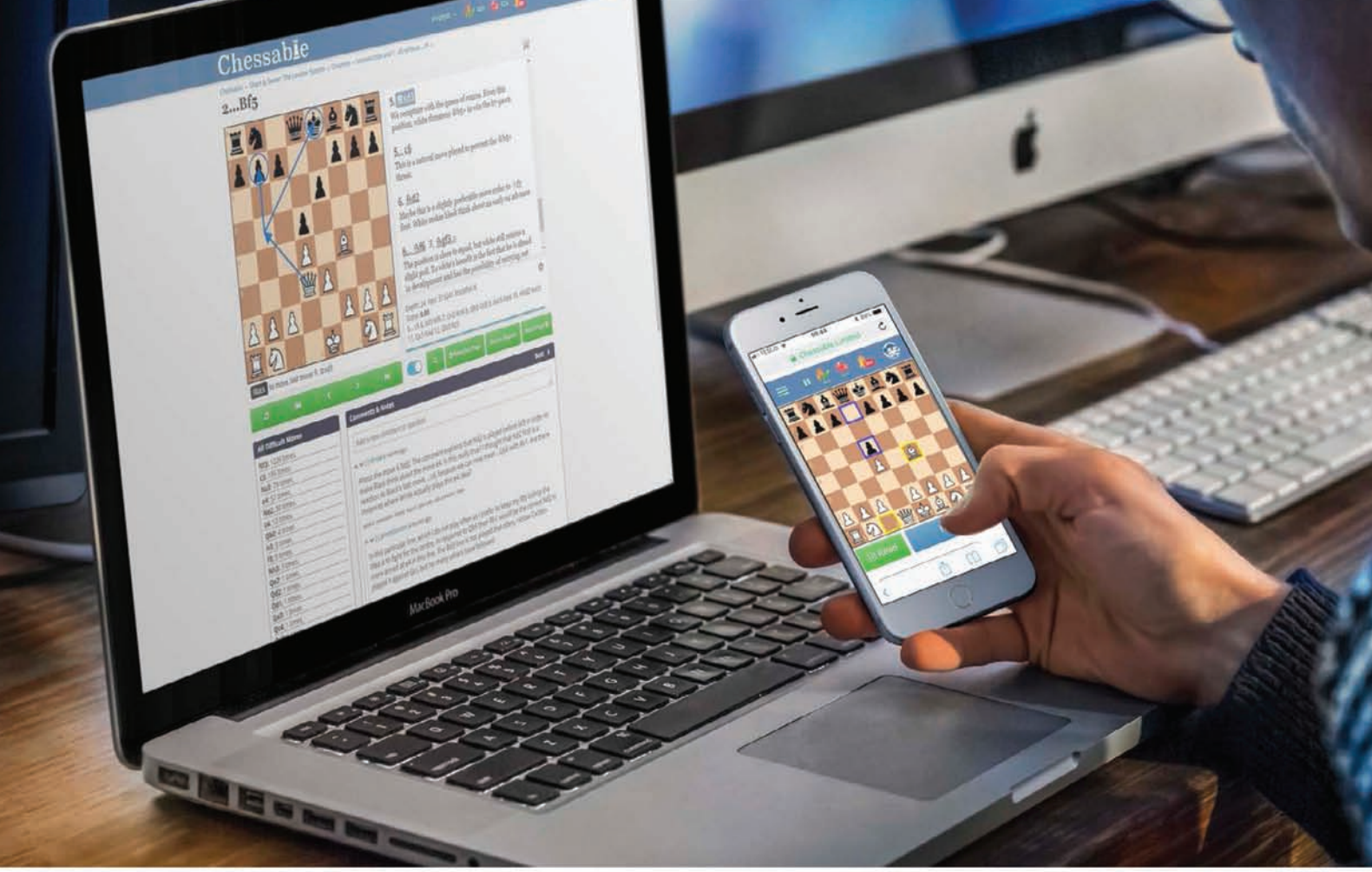
Hopeless, but so too would have been 34...♘xe5 35 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 36 ♖xd5.

35 ♘g4+ ♕e7 36 ♘f6+ 1-0

A delighted world champion, who finished with a most impressive '+6', flanked by second-placed Fabiano Caruana and also Arkadij Naiditsch, as well as GRENKE CEO Antje Leminsky.

GRENKE Chess Classic, Karlsruhe/Baden Baden - 20th - 29th April 2019 (Category 19, average rating = 2724)

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2845	*	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	7½	2983
2	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2819	½	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	6	2838
3	Arkadij Naiditsch	AZE	2695	½	0	*	½	1	½	0	½	1	1	5	2770
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2773	0	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	5	2761
5	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2774	½	½	0	½	*	½	½	1	0	1	4½	2718
6	Levon Aronian	ARM	2763	0	½	½	½	½	*	1	½	½	½	4½	2719
7	Peter Svidler	RUS	2735	0	½	1	½	½	0	*	½	1	½	4½	2722
8	Francisco Vallejo Pons	ESP	2693	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	4	2684
9	Georg Meier	GER	2628	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	*	0	2	2514
10	Vincent Keymer	GER	2516	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	1	*	2	2527



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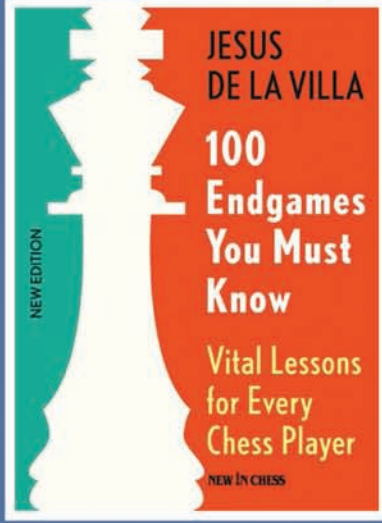

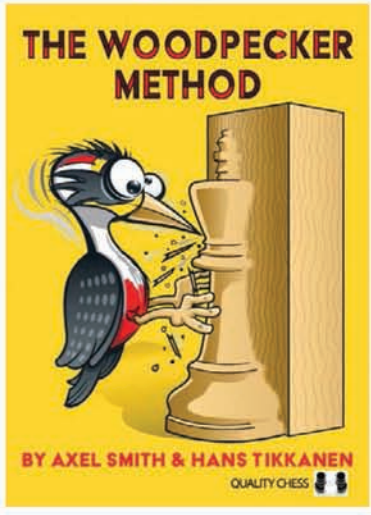

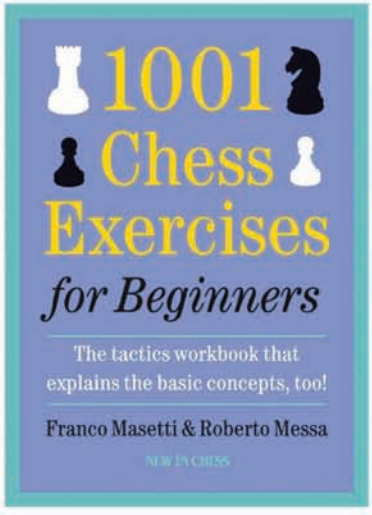
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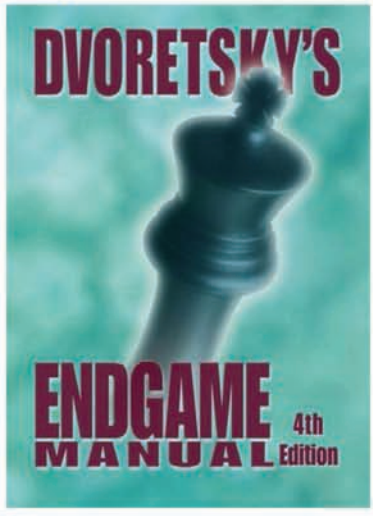

How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King

Dubov and Artemiev. Watch these names. They are the latest Russian talents to burst through on to the highest stage over the last few months.

At the end of December 2018, Daniil Dubov, now 23 years old, won the World Rapid Championship in St. Petersburg. This was a sensational result when one considers the strength of opposition – let's just remind you that Magnus Carlsen led the field – and is an indication of much more to come from him. Dubov is already spoken of in high terms by many of the other top Russian players for his creative approach to openings. At the moment he is floating just under the 2700 mark in classical chess, but he is definitely one to watch.

In an interview with *New In Chess* after his rapid world championship victory, Dubov singled out another young Russian for special praise, 21-year-old Vladislav Artemiev: "It is obvious he is a unique talent. The way he played at 16-17, the way he developed – it felt as if he was going to be the next Kasparov – not for his style, but for the speed of his improvement. Then he began to slow down..."

"His biggest problem at the high level is limited experience of playing key games. He is brilliant at chess, but his ability to keep himself together and taking practical decisions needs improving."

It seems that Artemiev has managed to surmount those weaknesses, as he stole the headlines in the first three months of 2019. In January he won the notoriously strong Gibraltar Open. He followed that by scoring 6½/8 playing for Russia in the World Team Championship, which was crucial in their securing of the gold medal. His team-mate, Alexander Grischuk, declared: "We have found our new Kramnik". Then following almost immediately afterwards at the end of March, Artemiev won the European Individual championship in Skopje. That extraordinary run of success puts him up to no.14 in the world on the live rating list.

Both Artemiev and Dubov have a strong strategic understanding and the refined endgame technique that one would expect from Russian players; but they also have a wild streak to their play, particularly Artemiev. Here are two examples, both from Skopje.

V.Artemiev-D.Paravyan
European Individual Ch., Skopje 2019

The position is already chaotic. The bishop on g3 is attacked, and there is nothing wrong with moving it to f4, but Artemiev decides to give up a piece to speed up the attack: **17 ♘e4 hxg4 18 fxg3**, and in a long game his bravery was finally rewarded.

V.Artemiev-K.Kulaots
European Individual Ch., Skopje 2019

Artemiev does not need to sacrifice, and the consequences are in fact difficult to judge, but in he went **19 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 20 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 21 ♖e1+**, and once again he won a long game with a sustained initiative.

In my research I came across a game from last year in which Artemiev and Dubov played against each other. It certainly demonstrates Artemiev's enterprising style; though we can't say the same for Dubov, who has a bad day at the office. He gets caught by an early attacking wave, is forced to go with the flow, and is finally swept away.

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever Black has moved, stop and try to guess White's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

V.Artemiev-D.Dubov
Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2018
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 d6 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘h3 ♘ge7

I have always enjoyed playing against the Closed Sicilian with Black. In the mid-1990s I wrote a book on the opening and the research didn't change my opinion – I think Black is fine – but I thought I would put the work to use and ended up playing it now and again with White. One of the advantages of the opening is that the play is not forcing; in other words, there is not one accepted recipe that everyone follows when playing against it, so often original positions appear on the board.

Here, I think 7...h5 is a decent option, for example, but it leads to all kinds of randomness, and is still little-explored.

8 0-0

Carlsen-Wojtaszek, Tromsø Olympiad 2014, continued 8 f4 ♘d4 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♕d2 – and by magic the world champion succeeded in winning easily on the kingside.

8...0-0 9 f4 exf4

Not obligatory. 9...f5 is possible.

10 ♘xf4 b5

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Vladislav Artemiev takes on 17-year-old compatriot Andrey Esipenko in the penultimate round of this year's European Individual Championship in Skopje. Artemiev would score an important win and go on to claim the gold medal. Will we soon see him invited to a super tournament?

11 a3

Three points. A calm start, discouraging Black from advancing again.

The first question we should be asking is – can White take the pawn? 11 ♘xb5 is possible, but not very good. After 11...♖b8 Black will recapture on b2 with immediate counterplay.

11 ♕d2 (*one point*) is a safe option, but Black's control over the long diagonal is impressive: 11...b4 12 ♘d1 a5.

11 ♕c1 (*one point*) is also tame, though by protecting the b-pawn, the knight can move into the middle: 11...b4 12 ♘cd5 ♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♗e6. Nevertheless, Black is fine.

In fact, White doesn't need to protect the pawn: 11 ♘cd5 (*one point*) 11...♘xd5 12 ♘xd5 is possible, but 12...♗e6, as above, is satisfactory. Incidentally, 12...♗xb2?! 13 ♖b1 would be inadvisable).

11 ♖b1 (*one point*) is similar to the lines above.

11...b4

Dubov accepts the challenge. Instead, 11...a5?! allows 12 ♘xb5 ♗xb2 13 ♖b1 ♗g7 14 a4 and the knight on b5 gives White a clear advantage. Larino Nieto-Iturrizaga, Leiria 2017.

12 axb4

One point. Normally, Black doesn't push the b-pawn unless it is supported by the a-pawn.

12...cxb4

12...♘xb4 just leaves Black with a poor structure and a misplaced knight.

13 ♘cd5

Three points. A typically bold move from Artemiev. If he spies a chance to unbalance and attack, he seizes it. All will soon become clear...

I have had similar positions and found that 13 ♘a4 (*three points*) can work well. Although the knight appears out of play, it can return to the fray after a later b2-b3 and ♘b2-c4 (yes I realise it would be en prise at the moment, but the manoeuvre might be prefaced by ♖b1 or perhaps d3-d4).

13...♗xb2

14 d4

Five points. This is the daring idea. The gate shuts, preventing the bishop from returning to the kingside – at the cost of the exchange.

What makes this idea so interesting is that White was not forced into it. As I pointed out on the last turn, Artemiev had a promising option in 13 ♘a4, yet still decided to take a risk with this unclear sacrificial continuation. I'm guessing red meat for breakfast.

A *consolation point* for 14 ♖b1 ♗g7 15 ♘xb4 ♘xb4 16 ♖xb4 a5 which probably isn't worse for White, but Black has an easy plan – push that pawn!

14...♗xa1

15 ♘f6+

Two points. Quite understandably, Artemiev plants the knight on f6 to establish a grip on the dark squares around the king. This could be mate.

15 ♕xa1 (*two points*) was also good, and there are subtle differences between the two moves. In this case Black is unable to find counterplay with 15...♕a5 because of the check on e7. On the other hand, 15...♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 f6 puts up some kind of defence, although even here there are ways to try to crack the kingside with 17 ♗h6 ♖f7 and 18 ♖f4 (threatening to take on f6 and ♗g5) or 18 e5.

15...♔h8

Instead, 15...♔g7?! 16 ♕xa1 ♔xf6 17 d5+ is mate in two.

16 ♕xa1

One point.

16...♕a5

This provides Black with some hope, otherwise White would invade on the kingside without too much difficulty.

17 ♕d1

Three points. Definitely the best square. 17 ♕b2 would allow ♕a3. 17 ♕e1 allows 17...b3, and 17 ♕c1 gives Black the chance to gain an important tempo with 17...♕a3 at some point.

Before you move on to tackle the game continuation, how would you respond to 17...♗a6? Answer on the next line.

There is no need to move the rook. The queen now has access to the kingside: 18 ♕g4! (*three points*) 18...♗xf1 19 ♕h4 h5 20 ♗xf1, and there is no decent defence to ♘4xh5.

17...♘g8

18 ♘4d5

Two points. Supporting the knight and maintaining the grip makes sense. The *same score* for 18 ♘xg8 ♔xg8 19 ♘d5.

18...♗e6

19 ♘xg8

Two points. Vacating the f6-square for the next piece.

19...♖xg8

20 ♗g5

Three points. I didn't say which piece! 20 ♘f6 (*one point*) isn't as effective after 20...♗c4.

20...♖g7

Instead, 20...♖gb8 21 ♗f6+ ♔g8 22 ♕c1 ♔f8 23 ♕h6+ ♔e8 24 ♕xh7 followed by ♘f4 is hopeless for Black. All you need to do is count the number of pieces attacking compared to the number defending to realise White is winning.

21 ♗f6

Two points. That already feels like goodnight for Black – but there are more twists and turns to come.

21...♖ag8

That has to be one of the saddest positions I've seen in a long while. But there is a difference between a sad position and a lost one. Keep working!

22 ♘e3

Five points. This prevents Black from carrying out the only possible manoeuvre that would free his position on the kingside.

Let's suppose instead that White took a time-out and played 22 ♔h1 – sometimes it can be good to let your opponent stew gently – but in this case there is 22...♗xd5 23 exd5 ♘b8! with the idea of ...♘d7, and once Black forces the exchange of the bishop on f6, he is back in the game.

That said, 22 ♕f3 (*three points*) was a solid move, with the idea of ♕f4. Black cannot play 22...♘b8 because of 23 ♘e7, winning material; and 22...♗xd5 23 exd5 ♘b8 24 ♗h3 prevents ...♘d7, when White is in control.

22 ♕d2 (no points) allows 22...b3, with counterplay; 22 ♕c1 (*two points*) is better.

If you wanted to play 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 – *halve your score*. At a stroke Black's pieces have been freed, and the game turns in his favour. Remember that Black has an extra pawn.

22...♕b6

Preventing White from playing d4-d5.

23 ♕d2

Two points. Reinstating the threat of d4-d5.

23...♘a5

24 h4

Three points. An attacking and a defensive move. Naturally, the pawn would like to move to h6; but the advance also provides the king with a safe square off the back rank and away from the queen on b6. 24 ♖b1 (*three points*) puts unpleasant pressure on the pawn on b4. 24 ♕d3 (*two points*) is also quite good, preventing the knight from moving to c4.

24...b3

25 ♖b1

Three points. This stretches Black: it is impossible for him to defend both kingside and queenside successfully.

25 cxb3 (*three points*) 25...♘xb3 26 ♕c3 was also good, as 26...♖c8 27 ♕b2 leaves the rook on g7 precariously placed.

25...b2

26 c4

Three points. The pawn on b2 isn't going any further and over the next few moves it becomes clear that it is impossible for Black to hold on to it.

26 ♕c3 (*three points*) was also very good as 26...♖b8 27 d5 wins; and 26...♖c8 27 ♕xb2 ♕xb2 28 ♖xb2 is also tremendous for White. Black has too many weaknesses: the bank rank, the pawns on d6 and a7 – for starters.

26...♖b8

27 ♔h2

Four points. Making such secure king moves gives me a warm feeling. Added to that, there is actually a threat to play d4-d5 again.

The immediate 27 d5 would fail to 27...♘xc4, and 27 h5 gxh5 isn't as clear as one would wish.

27...♕b4

28 ♕f2

Three points. Although it might seem as though Dubov is fighting back, in fact Artemiev has the situation completely under control.

On the other hand, 28 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 would not be at all clear.

28...♘xc4

29 ♘xc4

Two points.

Instead, 29 d5 would allow 29...♕d2 with good chances to survive.

29...♗xc4

30 d5

Three points. This has basically been White's aim ever since playing 22 ♘e3, and finally the conditions are perfect. The bishop on f6 connects with the other side of the board.

30...♕b6

31 ♖xb2

Two points. Why not?

31 ♗d4 (*two points*) was also good, with the idea 31...♕c7 32 ♕f6 ♖bg8 33 ♖xb2, and it is only a matter of time before White makes the final breakthrough.

31...♗b3

32 ♕e1

Three points. Artemiev has spotted an elegant finish. There were other ways to get there.

32 ♕d2 (*three points*) is the simplest, intending 32...♕b4 33 ♕h6 ♖bg8 34 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 35 ♕e3, and the bishop drops.

32 ♗d4 (*three points*) is still possible.

32...♕b4

33 ♕a1

Three points. The clearest way to win. White threatens ♗xg7+ and a discovered check on the diagonal.

33...♖bg8

34 ♕xa7

One point.

34...♕c4

Instead of this, how would you win after 34...♖f8? Answer on the next line.

The simplest is 35 ♕e3 ♖b8 36 ♕h6 ♖bg8 37 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 38 ♕e3, winning the bishop. All forced. *Two points* if you got this far.

35 ♕xf7 1-0

One point. What a stunning tour for the queen: f2-e1-a1-a7-f7. At this point Dubov decided to quit.

There are many ways to win: moving the rook into the attack or just taking the d-pawn is good enough. Black still cannot escape the dark-square bind that Artemiev set in train with his move 13 ♘cd5.

With this game and his recent brilliant results in classical chess, for the moment it's advantage to Artemiev over Dubov. But that can change quickly enough. Keep watching.

Now add up your points:

0-17	Unlucky
18-35	Average Club Player
36-44	Strong Club Player
45-50	FIDE Master
51-60	International Master
61-70	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.

Forthcoming Events

May 31 - June 2 **EACU Congress, Newmarket**
email: richard@fcasolutions.co.uk or call 01908 234014

June 1 **Kingston Rapidplay**
www.kingstonchess.org.uk/tournament/

June 1 **Southampton Rapidplay**
southamptonchess.org.uk/rapidplay/

June 6 **Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz**
www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

June 7-9 **South Lakes Congress, Kendal**
www.barrowchessclub.co.uk/southlakes.htm or call 01229 472100

June 8-9 **Tunbridge Wells Congress**
www.invictachess.co.uk or call 07729 624141

June 8 **Golders Green Rapidplay**
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

June 9 **Richmond Rapidplay**
rjcc.org.uk or call 020 8756 0474

June 9 **Stewarton Allegro**
www.chessscotland.com/events/ or call 01294 221486

June 15-16 **Hampstead U2200 Congress**
hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

June 15-16 **Heywood Congress**
www.heywoodcongress.org.uk or call 01706 627874

June 21-23 **Steve Boniface Memorial, Bristol**
www.bristolcongress.co.uk or call 07817 604014

June 21-23 **North Wales Congress, Llandudno**
www.welshchessunion.uk or email northwaleschess@aol.com

June 22 **Poplar Rapidplay**
www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub

June 25 **Muswell Hill Rapidplay**
muswellhillchess.blogspot.co.uk or call 07855 036537

June 28-30 **Whitby Congress**
noelschess.weebly.com

And for the Online Connoisseur:

May 29 – June 19 **FIDE Women's Candidates, Kazan**
fide.com; Kosteniuk, Lagno, Muzychuk, Muzychuk, Tan Zhongyi, etc.

June 4-14 **Norway Chess, Stavanger**
norwaychess.no/en; Anand, Aronian, Carlsen, Caruana, Ding Liren, etc.

June 24 - July 9 **Grand Chess Tour, Zagreb**
grandchesstour.com; Carlsen, Caruana, Giri, Nakamura, So, MVL, etc

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A Second Set of Silver!

Hot on the heels of England winning the silver medals at the World Team Championship in Astana, the Over-65s followed suit in Rhodes. Nigel Povah reports

England was well represented at the 7th World Seniors Team Championships held in Rhodes, Greece in April, with three teams in the Over-50s section and three in the Over-65s. The England I Over-50s team, comprising Jon Speelman, Keith Arkell, John Emms, Jim Plaskett and Chris Ward, who were seeded fourth, had a slightly disappointing tournament, finishing in sixth place on tie-break. However, they did have two notable successes, with Keith Arkell winning the individual silver medal on board 2 with 6/8 and John Emms winning the individual gold on board 3, also with 6/8. James Plaskett will report further next month.

In the Over-65s England I started out as sixth seeds from the 27 teams, in what proved to be a very tight competition. Russia, the defending champions, were of course the clear favourites, as their team average (2467) was 120 Elo points higher than anyone else's. However, England I managed to cast doubt over the Russians' supremacy by achieving a creditable 2-2 draw in round 3.

Robert Bellin (2315) ½-½
Evgeny Sveshnikov (2481)

Nigel Povah (2319) ½-½
Yuri Balashov (2470)

Tony Stebbings (2281) ½-½
Nukhim Rashkovsky (2488)

Ian Snape (2154) ½-½
Vladimir Zhelnin (2429)

Robert managed to effectively neutralise the danger from Sveshnikov with some shrewd opening preparation.

R.Bellin-E.Sveshnikov
England vs Russia
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e5 5 ♘f5!?

Robert has prepared an unusual sideline against the leading exponent of the Kalashnikov (5 ♘b5 d6).

5...♘f6

5...d5 6 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 7 exd5 ♗xf5 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 cxd3 0-0-0 11 ♔e2 gives White a slight edge due to Black having two pawn weaknesses compared to White's one.

6 ♘c3 d5 7 exd5 ♗xf5 8 dxc6 bxc6

8...♕xd1+ 9 ♘xd1 bxc6 10 ♘e3 ♗e6 11 ♘c4 favours White who has the better pawn structure.

9 ♕f3 ♕d7 10 ♗c4

10...♗e7

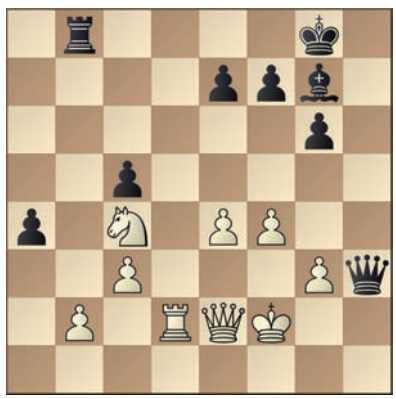
10...♗xc2 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 ♕e2 ♗g6 13 ♕xe5 0-0 looks like an improvement.

11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖d1 ♕c8 13 ♖e1 ♗xc2

Sveshnikov clearly wasn't too keen on his position, so offered a draw, which Robert accepted (**½-½**).

This draw was followed soon after by others on board 2 and 3, and we were left with Ian Snape's game.

V.Zhelnin-I.Snape
Russia vs England



We join the play after Zhelnin has played 45 ♖d1-d2. In what had been a very complex game, both players were under some time pressure. Ian now attempted to secure an advantage with some enterprising pawn moves:

45...g5!? 46 f5?!

The ugly 46 fxg5 was a better way of maintaining equality.

46...a3!

A clever pawn sacrifice to deflect White's knight, since if 47 bxa3?? ♗x3 with threats like ...♗d4+ and ...♖b1 in the air.

47 ♘xa3 ♗e5 48 ♕e3 ♕h2+49 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 50 ♔e2 f6 51 ♕xc5?

This pawn grab is highly risky. 51 ♔d3 and running to c2 was the safest and simplest way for White to play.

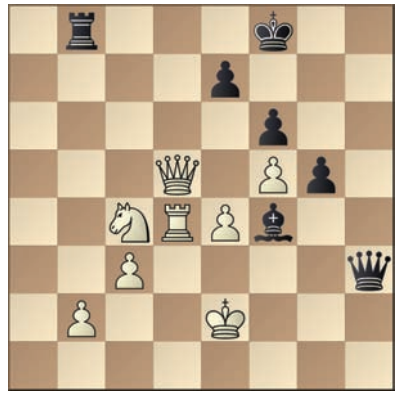
51...♗xg3?!

51...♕g4+! was the best continuation, but the difficulty for Black in this position is that he has so many attractive options that the best path is far from clear: 52 ♔d3 (or 52 ♔f1 ♗xg3 53 ♘c4 ♔f8! 54 ♕e3 ♖a8! 55 ♘a3 ♔f7 when ...♖h8 will be devastating) 52...♖d8+ 53 ♔c2 ♕xe4+ 54 ♔d1 ♕f3+ 55 ♔c2 (55 ♔c1 ♕f1+ 56 ♔c2 ♕xf5+ comes to the same) 55...♕xf5+ 56 ♔c1 ♖xd2 57 ♕c4+ ♔g7 58 ♔xd2 ♗xg3 with a clear advantage.

52 ♕d5+?

52 ♕xe7 was best, as the white king will escape via d3 and c2. With both kings relatively open, a draw by perpetual check is most likely.

52...♔f8 53 ♘c4 ♗f4 54 ♖d4



Ian, who had 12 minutes plus the 30-second increment compared to his opponent's three minutes, spent five minutes trying to find something but couldn't, so took the draw: **54...♕g4+**

Instead, 54...♕g2+ makes it easier for White to go wrong. After 55 ♔e1 (not 55 ♔d1?? ♕f1+ 56 ♔c2 ♕c1+ 57 ♔d3 ♕d1+ 58 ♘d2 ♕xd2+ 59 ♔c4 ♕xb2 when mate will soon follow and 55 ♔d3?? loses in the same manner: 55...♕f1+ 56 ♔c2 ♕c1+ 57 ♔d3 ♕d1+, etc) the engines give over '+4' for Black, but seem unable to find anything more than a repetition, as with 55...♕g1+ 56 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 57 ♔e1, since any attempt to advance the g-pawn will be

met by White playing e4-e5 to open up Black's king.
55 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 56 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 57 ♔e1 ♕g1+½-½

After this impressive result we disappointingly lost our next two matches to Sweden I, 1½-2½, and Austria, 1-3, and by this stage assumed we had blown any chances we might have had of achieving a top placing, as we were down in twelfth position with only five points from a possible 10. Meanwhile Russia weren't having everything their own way and conceded another draw to Germany, so by the end of round 5 they were joined in the lead by Israel, Iceland and Finland on 8 points.

We decided that we had nothing to lose and that we should try to do as well as possible in our remaining fixtures. Fortunately, that is exactly what happened, as we reeled off four straight victories, enabling us to sneak through into the medal positions, as surprisingly Russia dropped further draws to France in round 8 and Sweden I in round 9. Indeed, had they lost this final match, which could have happened, we would have won the gold medals on tie-break!

Leading scores: 1 Russia 14/18 (23.5 game points), 2 England I 13 (23.5), 3 France 13 (22.5), 4 Israel 13 (21), 5 Germany 12 (22).

Our success was down to having a great team spirit with good contributions from all five squad members: Robert Bellin 4½/8 (56%); Nigel Povah 4½/7 (64%); Tony Stebbings 5/7 (71%); Ian Snape 6/8 (75%); and John Quinn 3½/6 (58%). However, special mentions must go to Tony Stebbings for his impressive performance which secured him the individual gold medal on board 3 and to Ian Snape who was the only undefeated member of our squad with four wins and four draws, which gave him the bronze medal on board 4. An honourable mention should also go to Brian Hewson who won the board 5 bronze medal, whilst playing for England II in the Over-65s.

Here is a nice win by Tony from the match against Sweden.

Notes by Tony Stebbings

B.Hammar-A.Stebbings
Sweden vs England
Bogo-Indian Defence

1 d4

Nowadays even senior players mostly have laptop computers and prepare seriously before a game. My opponent is usually an e4 player, but surprised me with d4, so I guessed he had something ready for me.
1...♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♗b4+

At this point I decided to play the Bogo because I'd not played it for a while, so it might be unexpected.
4 ♗d2 a5 5 ♘c3 b6 6 g3 ♗b7

Pictured with chief arbiter, Vadim Tsypin (left), four of the five members of the successful England Over-65 side (left to right): Robert Bellin, Nigel Povah, Ian Snape and Tony Stebbings.

6...♗a6 is the other popular choice in this position, which scores very well for Black: 7 b3 d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♗g2 0-0 10 0-0 ♖e8 11 ♖e1 ♘bd7 with a very comfortable position.
7 ♗g2 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 ♕c2 ♘bd7 10 ♖ad1 h6 11 ♖fe1 ♗xc3 12 ♗xc3 ♗e4

12...♘e4 13 ♘d2 looks a bit better for White.
13 ♕c1 c6

Fortunately I'd had a similar position to this before and knew what to do: try to keep his bishop on c3 out of the game and push forward on the queenside.
14 ♗h3

White's plan is to expel the black bishop from e4 and try to expand in the centre with e2-e4.
14...d5 15 b3 b5 16 ♘d2 ♗g6 17 ♗b2 ♕b8

17...a4 immediately allows 18 ♗a3 and 19 ♗d6, improving the bishop's prospects.
18 ♗g2 a4 19 h3

I assume he was worried about 19 e4 ♗h5. If 19 ♗a3 then either 19...b4 or 19...♖c8 is good for Black, but he really needed to play 19 c5 to close up the queenside when the position is still roughly level.
19...axb3 20 axb3 bxc4 21 bxc4 ♖a2

22 ♗c3?

The only move was 22 ♗a3 ♖c8 with a significant advantage for Black: for example, 23 e4 when 23...♕a7 either wins the d-pawn or sees White becoming tied up, as after 24 ♗b2 ♖b8 25 ♗a1 ♗h5 26 g4 ♗g6 when it is difficult to find a decent move for White, who is under significant pressure.
22...♗c2!

He had only considered 22...♖c2.
23 e4 ♗xd1 24 ♖xd1 dxe4 25 ♘xe4 ♕b3 26 d5? ♖c2 27 ♕e3 ♘xe4 28 ♕xe4 cxd5 29 cxd5 ♖xc3 30 ♖b1 ♕xd5 0-1

England II (Mark Page, Geoff James, David Bray, Michael Stokes and Brian Hewson) finished a creditable 10th with 10 points and England III (Andrew Baruch, Stewart Reuben, Brian Valentine and Trefor Thynne) finished 14th on 9 points. Stewart Reuben deserves a special mention, not only for his help in organising the English teams for this event, but also his splendid performance, scoring 5/9 and gaining 38 rating points, despite having just turned 80.

England I now face the challenge of following up on this result. However, with John Nunn becoming eligible for the Over-65s next year, we hope we might be strengthened in such a way that the gold medals become a genuine possibility!

Just Too Good

The 4NCL season concluded in Telford in early May. Guildford again proved too strong

All eyes were on defending champions, Guildford, at the final 4NCL weekend and the last to be held in Telford for a while. Despite the absence of Gawain Jones, who was busy triumphing in Malmo, Guildford had amassed a stellar line-up, spearheaded by Michael Adams, Luke McShane and Matthew Sadler, with support from the likes of Laurent Fressinet and Hou Yifan. The question on everyone's lips wasn't so much would Guildford win the league, as would either Cheddleton or new challengers Manx be able to take something off them?

Blackthorne Russia 1½-6½ Guildford

Danny Gormally (2509) ½- ½
Michael Adams (2698)

Richard Bates (2348) ½-½
Laurent Fressinet (2639)

Andrew Ledger (2334) ½-½
Etienne Bacrot (2683)

Simon Ansell (2333) 0-1
Matthew Sadler (2688)

Dave Ledger (2260) 0-1
Luke McShane (2686)

Chris Duncan (2221) 0-1
Hou Yifan (2662)

Jonathan Nelson 0-1
Romain Edouard (2650)

Syringa Camp (1655) 0-1
Nicholas Pert (2563)

On paper Blackthorne Russia had little chance and yet the match wasn't summed up only by debutante Hou Yifan's neat finish, but also the fine performances from the leaders of the Blackthorne team. Admittedly Danny Gormally was largely outplayed and needed Michael Adams to miss a forced win on move 40, but Richard Bates put his great Sicilian experience to good use and never looked like losing, while Etienne Bacrot was unrecognisable and fortunate to survive.

Hou Yifan-C.Duncan
Guildford vs Blackthorne Russia

29 ♘f5! exf5 30 exf5 1-0

The long diagonal proves Black's undoing, in view of 30...♕c7 31 ♗xg7.

Elsewhere Manx and Cheddleton both remained two points behind the champions. Headed up by wildcard Richard Rapport, who instructively ground down Matthew Turner, Manx proved too strong for Barbican, while Cheddleton largely outclassed White Rose, despite James Adair looking back to his best as he outplayed Keith Arkell with the aid of a long-term exchange sacrifice.

Guildford 6½-1½ Cheddleton

Michael Adams (2698) 1-0
David Howell (2701)

Laurent Fressinet (2639) 0-1
Jonathan Hawkins (2567)

Etienne Bacrot (2683) 1-0
Tamas Fodor (2528)

Matthew Sadler (2688) 1-0
Keith Arkell (2467)

Luke McShane (2686) 1-0
Ezra Kirk (2427)

Hou Yifan (2662) ½-½
David Eggleston (2401)

Romain Edouard (2650) 1-0
Alex Astaneh Lopez (2427)

Nicholas Pert (2563) 1-0
Fiona Steil-Antoni (2156)

We're used to seeing these two clash in the final round, not the penultimate one, but the 4NCL now has a 'Big Three', thanks to the arrival of Manx Liberty. Whilst the Isle of Man-organised international stars were busy disposing of Wood Green 6½-1½, despite Rapport having to suffer to hold against Jon Speelman and Aryan Tari being rather fortunate to win against Ravi Haria, Guildford took no prisoners and won by that score too.

Hou Yifan, possibly feeling the effects of her celebratory trip to KFC the day before, was happy to wheel out the Petroff and draw quickly, but Michael Adams won in trademark and textbook fashion on top board, with the only slightly sub-optimal note for Roger Emerson's side that they lost their first individual game in more than two years, courtesy of Jonathan Hawkins outplaying Fressinet, as we'll enjoy next month.

M.Adams-D.Howell
Guildford vs Cheddleton
Giuoco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4 ♗c5 4 d3 ♘f6 5 0-0 d6 6 c3 0-0 7 h3 a6 8 a4 ♗a7 9 ♖e1 ♘e7 10 ♘bd2 ♘g6 11 ♘f1 c6

Highly logical play from both sides thus far. Adams now steps away from the central hit.

12 ♗b3 d5 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘g3 a5

A new move. 14...h6 15 d4 exd4 16 ♘xd4 ♗b6 had been seen in Svidler-Jakovenko, Novosibirsk 2016, when perhaps Adams would have tried 17 ♘h5!? followed by ♕f3.

15 d4 exd4 16 ♘xd4 h6

After this, White never lets go off the initiative he seized with 15 d4. The silicon draws attention to 16...♗e6!?, which may at first look ridiculous due to 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♘e4, but actually after 18...♕c7 Black is very active and shouldn't be worse.

17 ♘b5! ♗b8

Black is also unpleasantly slightly worse after 17...cxb5 18 ♗xd5 bxa4 19 ♕h5! when his best try is perhaps 19...♕f6 20 ♘e4 ♕f5 21 ♕xf5 ♗xf5, hoping to obtain some counterplay down the b- or d-files.

18 ♗xd5 cxd5 19 ♕d4

In the July issue of *CHESS Magazine*:

- **Guildford's 4NCL triumph: the inside story**
- **Jon Speelman on an instructive Carlsen ending**
- **Gawain Jones wins the TePe Sigeman in style**
- **Did Magnus maintain his winning run in Norway?**

19...♗xg3?!

Forcing an opposite-coloured bishop scenario, but one where Black's control of the light squares doesn't count for too much. 19...♖e8! 20 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 was a better try, being happy to offer a pawn to untangle with 21 ♕xd5 ♗d7 22 ♗d2 (only White is risking anything after 22 ♕xb7?! ♗c6 23 ♕b6 ♕e1+ 24 ♔h2) 22...♗c6 23 ♕d3 ♗e5 when the bishop-pair provides definite compensation.

20 fxg3 ♖a6 21 ♗e3 ♗f5 22 ♖ad1 ♗c2

Howell was undoubtedly relying on this idea, but while he can save d5, he cannot shake off White's grip.

23 ♖d2 ♗b3 24 ♗f2 ♖c6?

This must have been based on an oversight. Instead, 24...♖e6 wouldn't have left Black suffering too much, since White must avoid 25 ♖xe6 fxe6 26 ♕a7? ♕g5.

25 ♕a7! ♕d7

The d-pawn would, after all, prove Black's undoing if 25...♗xa4 26 ♕xb7.

26 ♕xa5 ♖a6 27 ♕c7 ♖d8 28 ♕xd7 ♖xd7

White cannot retain his extra pawn, but observe how Adams sells it to gain several large positional trumps.

29 ♘d4 ♗xa4 30 b3 ♗c6 31 b4! b5 32 ♖e8+ ♔h7 33 ♖b8 ♖c7 34 ♘xc6!

Michael Adams was British no.2 as we went to press, but is still very much a force to be reckoned with, as David Howell found out. Do expect to see Adams back over 2700 soon.

A Fischeresque exchange. It may look a shame to give up the dominant knight for this bishop, but it's always important to remember that it's what stays on the board which counts, not what goes off.

34...♖axc6 35 ♗d4 ♘e7 36 ♖xb5

Winning a pawn while maintaining control of the board. The game is effectively over.

36...♘f5 37 ♗e5 ♖c8 38 ♖dxd5 f6 39 ♗f4 ♘e7 40 ♖d7 ♘g6 41 ♖bb7 ♖g8 42 ♖bc7 1-0

Manx Liberty 2-6 Guildford

Richard Rapport (2726) ½-½
Matthew Sadler (2688)

Constantin Lupulescu (2634) ½-½
Michael Adams (2698)

Daniel Fridman (2629) 0-1
Luke McShane (2686)

Aryan Tari (2615) ½-½
Hou Yifan (2662)

Mircea-Emilian Parligras (2633) 0-1
Etienne Bacrot (2683)

Viktor Erdos (2610) 0-1
Romain Edouard (2650)

Dinara Saduakassova (2461) ½-½
Laurent Fressinet (2639)

Dietmar Kolbus (2285) 0-1
Jorden van Foreest (2598)

Come the big, final round and Manx faced a virtually impossible task: only by defeating Guildford 8-0 could they win the league. As it was, they didn't even win a game. Despite a second successive white, Mickey Adams never got far, but neither did Richard Rapport. Hou Yifan was, however, pressing against a former junior world champion and in the end Guildford simply proved far too strong.

Luke McShane ground out a win in 102 moves, Etienne Bacrot and Romain Edouard both saved their best of the weekend for the final round, and even wildcard Jorden van Foreest got in on the act, overcoming Manx supremo Dietmar Kolbus in a wild encounter. And so it was congratulations once again to the all-conquering Guildford boys, who've now won the league seven years in a row and haven't lost a match since the 2011-12 season. It would take a brave man to bet against anything changing next year.

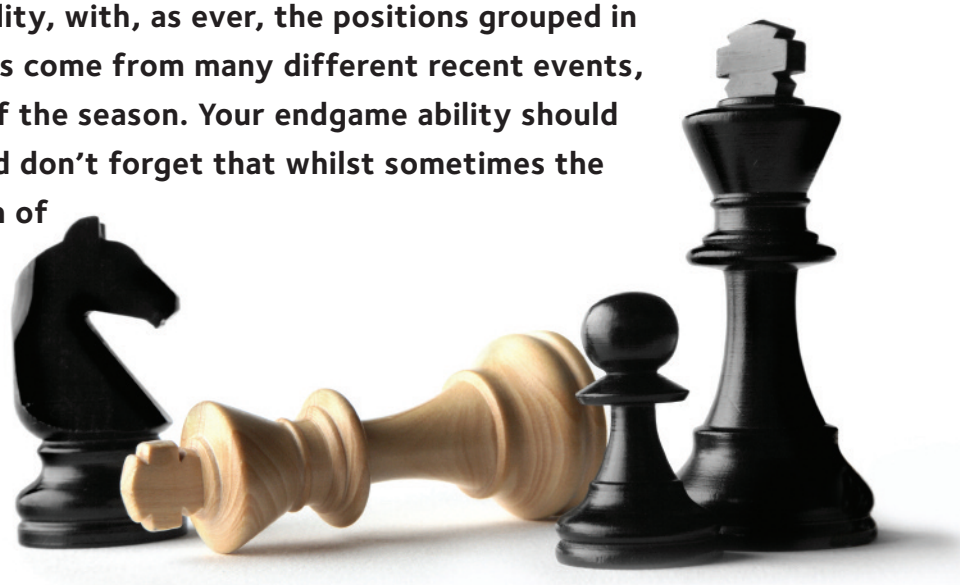
2018 - 2019 4NCL - Division 1 Championship

	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Pts	GP
1	Guildford	X	6-2	6½-1½	7-1	7½-½	5-3	7-1	6½-1½	**14**	45½
2	Manx Liberty	2-6	X	4½-3½	3½-4½	5-3	6½-1½	6½-1½	6-2	**10**	34
3	Cheddleton	1½-6½	3½-4½	X	5½-2½	5½-2½	4½-3½	7½-½	5-3	**10**	33
4	White Rose	1-7	4½-3½	2½-5½	X	3½-4½	4½-3½	2-6	5½-2½	**6**	23½
5	Guildford II	½-7½	3-5	2½-5½	4½-3½	X	4-4	4½-3½	4-4	**6**	23
6	Wood Green	3-5	1½-6½	3½-4½	2½-5½	4-4	X	5½-2½	5½-2½	**5**	26½
7	Barbican 4NCL	1-7	1½-6½	½-7½	6-2	3½-4½	2½-5½	X	6-2	**4**	21
8	Blackthorne Russia	1½-6½	2-6	3-5	2½-5½	4-4	2½-5½	2-6	X	**1**	17½

Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from many different recent events, including the final 4NCL weekend of the season. Your endgame ability should be especially tested this month, and don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on page 53.



Warm-up Puzzles

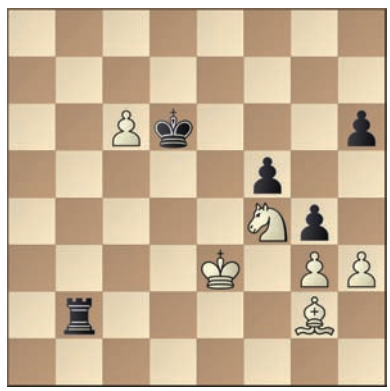
(1) K.Bhatia-H.Fabri
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play

(2) I.Krush-A.Zatonskih
U.S. Women's Championship, St. Louis 2019
Black to Play

(3) I.Deswarte-M.Simons
English Over-50 Championship, Solihull 2019
White to Play

(4) R.Robson-S.Sevian
U.S. Championship, St. Louis 2019
Black to Play

(5) P.Harrington-C.Dossett
Scarborough 2019
White to Play

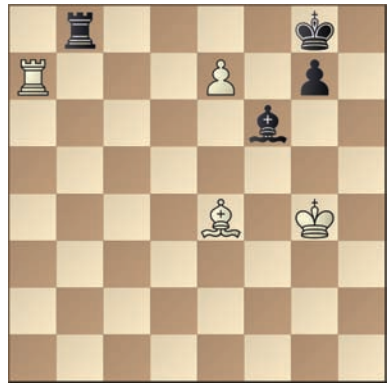


(6) A.Sharevich-A.Gorti
U.S. Women's Championship, St. Louis 2019
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 53

(7) S.Sucikova-F.Steil-Antoni
4NCL, Telford 2019
White to Play

(8) K.Rusev-K.Badev
Bulgarian Championship, Kozloduy 2019
White to Play



(9) B.Gelfand-S.Shankland
Prague 2019
Black to Play and Draw

(10) M.Kobalia-M.Antipov
Russian Team Championship, Sochi 2019
White to Play

(11) K.Bhatia-H.Fabri
4NCL, Telford 2019
Black to Play

(12) T.Chapman-A.Lewis
European Over-50 Championship, Rhodes 2019
White to Play

(13) J.Langreck-N.Short
Bangkok 2019
Black to Play

(14) B.Adhiban-P.Maghsoodloo
World Team Championship, Astana 2019
White to Play

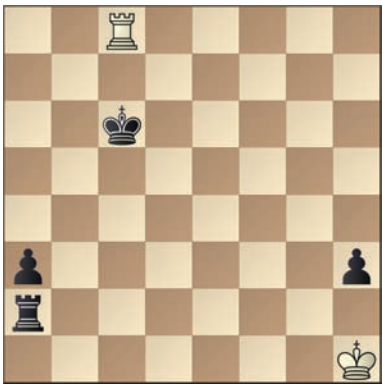
(15) R.Dimitrov-E.Di Benedetto
European Individual Ch., Skopje 2019
White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 53

(16) A.Korobov-M.Karthikeyan
Moscow 2019
White to Play

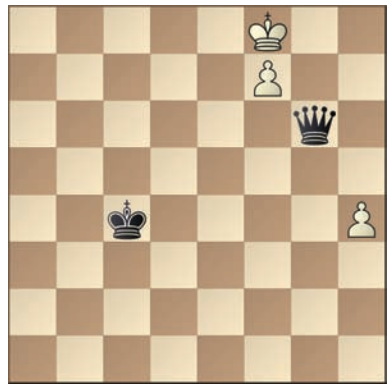
(17) A.Smirnov-C.Henriquez Villagra
Internet (rapid) 2019
White to Play

(18) M.Otruba-J.Obsivac
Czech Championship, Ostrava 2019
White to Play and Draw



(19) M.Admiraal-P.Tregubov
Belgian League 2019
Black to Play

(20) I.Andersen-T.Hoffmann
Danish League 2019
White to Play



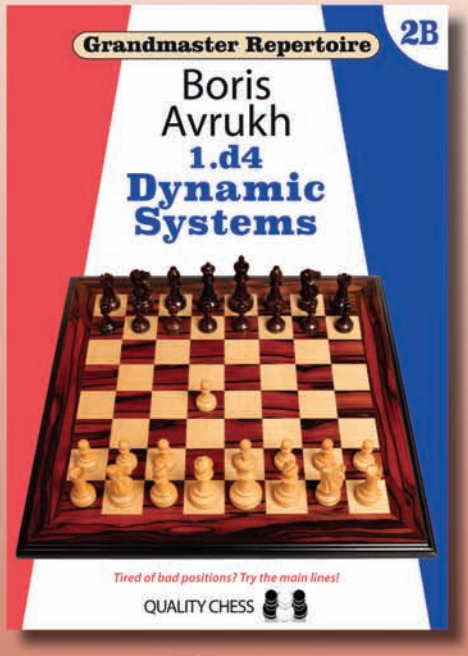
(21) Yu Yangyi-P.Harikrishna
Shenzhen 2019
White to Play and Draw

(22) N.Grandelius-V.Keymer
European Individual Ch., Skopje 2019
White to Play

(23) R.Rapport-V.Laznicka
Prague 2019
White to Play

(24) P.H.Nielsen-S.Maze
German Bundesliga 2019
White to Play

Two great new books from Quality Chess



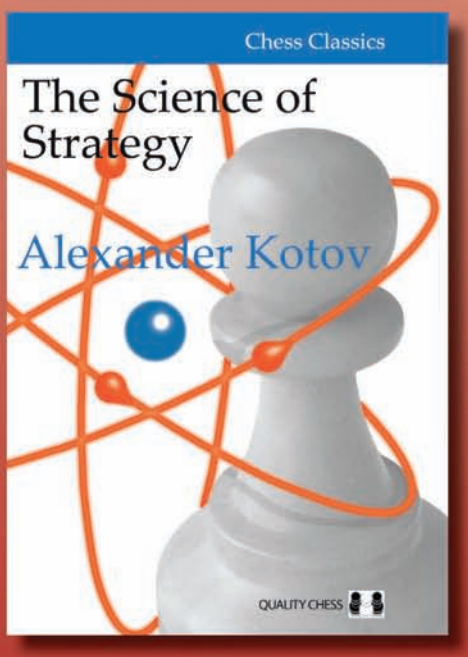
592 pages
Published on April 3rd

Dynamic Systems – Grandmaster Repertoire 2B by Boris Avrukh

When Boris Avrukh released his 1.d4 repertoire books in 2008 and 2010, they caused a sensation. GM Michael Adams remarked that *"The high-quality Grandmaster Repertoire series has taken this format to a completely different level."* Avrukh's newly revamped 1.d4 series has raised the bar even higher.

Volume 2B completes the series by providing cutting-edge antidotes to tricky defences such as the Dutch, various Benoni set-ups, Benko and Budapest Gambits, and anything else not covered in volumes 1A, 1B & 2A. With innumerable updates and improvements, this book is essential reading for any ambitious 1.d4 player.

Boris Avrukh is an Olympiad gold medallist, former World Junior Champion and analysis partner of World Championship finalists.



240 pages
Published on April 3rd

The Science of Strategy by Alexander Kotov

Chess is a strategically deep game and it is no surprise that players often struggle to find the right strategy over the board. Computers may be able to show a good move in a position, but they can't explain how it should fit into an overall plan.

Kotov's clear and methodical style makes this book an ideal guide to chess strategy. He describes the chess in words rather than relying overmuch on variations, and illustrates his ideas in insightfully annotated positional games, with the likes of Alekhine, Botvinnik and Karpov featuring heavily.

Alexander Kotov was the 1948 Soviet Champion (jointly with Bronstein), and a member of the USSR gold-medal-winning team at the 1952 and 1954 Olympiads. He is also renowned as a chess author, most famously for *Think Like a Grandmaster*.

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New York! New York!

From Washington Square, to the Chess Forum and Marshall Chess Club, Ben Graff took a trip into the world of New York chess

"Spring and Fall are the best times in Washington Square. When it's a little cool or there's a breeze, the guys play more sharply, with renewed promise."

Searching for Bobby Fischer – Fred Waitzkin

I had known for some time that my day job was going to take me to the city. For weeks I had been looking forward to the moment when I would be able to leave work meetings, flip charts and spreadsheets behind, to explore a New York Chess scene that I felt like I knew, but had never actually experienced. I wanted to learn what it was really like to spar with the hustlers in Washington Square and in the Chess Forum, the chess shop just across the way.

The very thought of stepping through the door of the Marshall, the world's most famous chess club, was enough to make my spine tingle. Above all, I was eager to learn what it was like to play here, to teach others, to survive. I wanted to be a part of this community, however fleetingly.

Perhaps I had an image in my mind from *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and other books that had portrayed chess within these few New York blocks so vividly. Fred Waitzkin's tale of his son Josh, a 1980s U.S. chess prodigy, painted an extraordinary picture of chess in Washington Square and the hustlers who spent their days at its chess tables. Their nobility and their struggles. Against the backdrop of a town that back then was still seeking both Bobby Fischer and his potential successor. A place where anyone was welcome to pull up a chair and settle down to play. For me, Fred Waitzkin's book served to validate the choices not just of those who played in New York, but of chess players everywhere. Now it was my turn to venture into this world.

Amongst others, my journey would bring me into contact with Simon, Leroy Mak and Aaron in Washington Square. Simicha and Paul at the Chess Forum. Grandmasters Irina Krush and Tamaz Gelashvili, and Brian Quick, the Marshall's Executive Director. I would get to play a lot of games and to learn even more.

Ben Graff in New York - sraight from business meetings to being hustled for a game of blitz.

While I was still in England I had reached out to National Master Evan Rabin, a native of the city who now runs the thriving Premier Chess coaching programme. I was keen to get his take on the scene and places I might visit. "Whoever you are, however strong, there is always a game to be had in New York," he tells me. His passion for working with children shines through. "Chess is the best of life lessons," he says. "Sometimes it is a case of giving people enough belief."

Evan has seen teachers be doubtful that young children could pick up the game and then amazed by the ease with which they do. How educators can come to realise that chess is a gateway to a whole world of possibility. I asked Evan about S*earching for Bobby Fischer* and he said the portrait is "Pretty accurate, if a little exaggerated." Evan tells me that everyone knows who Fischer is, but increasingly kids are hazy on the details. Not all realise he is dead. His place in chess history is without parallel, but there is more to New York chess we reflect.

Evan is quick to praise New York resident Garry Kasparov for his contribution, particularly to junior chess. Then he tells me about the time he played Fabiano Caruana at the Chess Forum.

"His coach had been giving me a lesson. He told me there was this strong kid he wanted me to play. I was ten and he was eight. He actually dropped his queen, but somehow I went wrong and he ended up winning." He laughs at the memory. Later he will send me his guide to playing chess in New York.

Finally, I am in the south west corner of the park. The Washington Square chess tables are spread out in a semicircle. Simon sees me hesitating. Beckons me over. "Shall we play?" he says. "Five dollars for a game." I sit down, shake his hand, run my fingers over the marble board that has been polished smooth by millions of encounters. Simon's battered chess pieces are between us; the turret of a white rook has been damaged, a black rook is missing its turret altogether. These are pieces that have seen some serious work. Simon wears a heavy looking coat with a furry hood. There are beads around his neck. A bottle of orange juice on the table between us. He has a large rucksack by his side. I tell him what I am doing. Let's talk and play, he says. I push my queen pawn forward and we begin.

It was a draw as Ben took on Simon, one of the famous hustlers in Washington Square.

Simon has been playing here for many years. "I've seen everything," he says. "Everyone has been here. This is where real chess is at." He speaks fondly of *Searching for Bobby Fischer.* "Fred wasn't a chess player you know," he says. " But I think he did the game a lot of good. I've spent a lot of time with him and Josh."

I play the London System and Simon talks fast as we move the pieces. "The trouble is no one these days properly respects the park. The authorities see all chess players here as undesirable. We need better rules to protect this as an area for chess players," he says as our queens come off. "We don't need noise. We need people to behave in the right way."

"I'm here everyday," Simon tells me proudly. "Rain or shine, makes no difference to me. I can make a living doing this. It's not just playing games for money. Sometimes I can teach kids for one hundred dollars an hour. The thing with a place like this is that there can be everything going on or nothing go on. You never know who might walk in and sit at these tables."

My London has calcified. We are in an opposite bishop ending in which neither of us can touch each others' pawns. Most likely there is some sort of law that says such positions must be declared a draw immediately, but we keep playing. I am engrossed in the conversation.

"I'm a chess player," Simon says. "This is what I do." Not that there could be any doubt. I am half tempted to email the office to tell them that I am never going back. That I have finally found my calling and am going to set up camp in the park. It is a crazy thought of course, but however different our day-to-day lives might be, chess has made us kindred spirits. In that moment our game is everything, until finally we have no option but to push our kings back and forth and agree the draw. I ask Simon if there is a way I could send him this article. He smiles. "Trust me," he says, "When you write it, someone will show me."

I play out another draw with a player called Aron and split a couple of games with Leroy Mak. Leroy tells me that he learnt to play chess when he was in prison, a few years ago. That the park has become really important. Has given him a purpose. I am struck by his warmth and his enthusiasm. Yet again, the positive role chess can play. I had not expected there to be many kibitzers, but a number of people have been watching on. I talk to a few afterwards. Mainly students from NYU. Someone from Manchester with a couple of hours to spare has also found his way to the park. "I don't even play chess," he tells me, "but this is awesome."

When it is time to go, the park players point me in the direction of the Marshall Chess Club, only five minutes away. Soon I am standing outside the wooden door with the plaque just above it that simply says: 'Marshall Chess Club'. I feel incredibly excited. Capablanca and Alekhine and a host of other world champions have played here. If only for a few hours, this will be my club too. I ask a passer-by if he will take a picture. He asks if I would like him to take another. Yes, please, I say.

I make my way up the stairs to the first floor. I feel the weight of the history. It was here that Bobby Fischer as a thirteen year old won the 'Game of the Century' against Donald Byrne in 1956 and nine years later participated in the Capablanca Memorial Tournament via Teletype. There is no other place on the planet that can rival the chess history of the Marshall.

On the first floor there are thirty or so chess sets out in the main room. Padded chairs and benches for the players to sit on. Chess pictures, cartoons and newspaper cuttings on the wall. Glass-fronted cupboards housing chess books. A grand looking 'Marshall Chess Club Amateur Championship' Trophy rests on the mantelpiece above a fireplace.

The world famous Marshall Chess Club continues to thrive day in, day out.

For all the history and the elegance, what strikes me is not how different this venue feels to other places I have played, but in some ways how similar. Just as the grandest cathedral is connected to the simplest of churches by a commonality of purpose, so it is with chess. I can feel something I know well in the ozone. The magic that only chess can bring. It makes me think that any of us could walk into any club in the world, from the most significant to the smallest, and immediately feel at home.

I head into the office and have a chat with Brian Quick, the Marshall Club Executive Director. He tells me that the club currently has about 500 members, including around half of the U.S.'s strongest players. He speaks proudly of the recent improvements that have come about. The new website and electronic pairings system. The big screens to stream live chess events to the members. The new toilet facilities (which a number of others at the club tell me have made a big difference).

"So many people can make a living from chess in New York in lots of different ways," Brian says. He talks about the connection between the park and the Marshall. "We had the park players in for a Q&A and a blitz tournament a while back. They are always welcome here." Brian then mentions that Stephen Moss had sent the club a copy of his book, *The Rookie,* as it had featured the

Marshall Club.

"Tell him how much we liked it," he says. As I am leaving he points out that Grandmaster Irina Krush, currently the second ranked women's player in the U.S., is just finishing giving a lesson on the very table used in the Carlsen-Karjakin world championship match. "Go talk to her," he says. "I'm sure she would be happy to."

Irina could not be friendlier, when confronted by a star-struck and somewhat stumbling Brit. She has a couple more lessons to do, but is happy to sit down for a chat a little later. We fix a time and I head to the Chess Forum. It is only a short walk and soon I am standing outside windows filled with the most beautiful chess sets imaginable. This place is every chessplayer's dream. Classical music is playing in the background. Players are quick to welcome me in and to offer me a game. A man with an Italian accent is giving some children a chess lesson. His voice carries. "What should you move first, the knight or the bishop?" "Have you heard of Bobby Fischer? One day I will tell you all about him." I wonder if one of these children might blunder a queen today, win anyway and one day be the challenger in a world title match.

I play a few games with Simcha Grieve, a psychology student who was taught by his grandfather. Then several more with a physicist called Paul. I talk to a few of the players about Washington Square. I sense both respect and caution toward the park players. "It is hard not to recognise those who give their life to playing in the park," one Chess Forum patron tells me. "But don't wholly mythologise the experience either. There can be violence; there is some crime. Anywhere there are people, there are always issues," he tells me with a shrug.

I make my way back to the Marshall, busier now than it was earlier in the afternoon. Players are starting to gather for the final round of a tournament that is taking place that evening. Some sit at the boards and eat take-out food. A few others are going through games and I chat to Michael and his friend who are playing that evening. Michael is a bus driver, who started playing a few years ago and now is hooked.

We talk about some of the differences between chess in the U.S. and in the UK. "We don't have Evening League chess to the extent you do. It's more individual." He pauses. "Say, tell me why you guys have ECF ratings rather than FIDE like everyone else?" We talk about this a little, even if some questions defy logic.

Irina finishes up her lesson and we head to a smaller 'skittles' room that is adjacent to the main playing hall. She tells me how privileged she feels to have grown up in New York and to have the Marshall as her base for work. She has one further lesson to do after our chat, which will make for five hours of teaching for her today. We talk about the potential for players to improve, to break through their natural ceilings. "It is possible with hard work," she tells me.

Ben met seven-time U.S. Women's Champion Irina Krush at the Marshall, but who took the photo?

"It is easier for children of course, with adults it will always be a little more akin to learning a foreign language, but all things are possible," Irina adds. I ask her if coaching others harms her own game. "It's not so much that," she says. "More that coaching is, while very rewarding, also tiring. It can then be hard to find the time to do your own work. It's funny how things go though; sometimes my best results come when I least expect them." Irina tells me that she will soon be heading to China to play. That the New York Open will be taking place in the Marshall and she is in for that too.

I mention that I had enjoyed Paul Hoffman's *Kings Gambit*, in which Irina featured. She smiles and tells me that she had liked the book. We talk a little more generally about the New York Chess scene. "It really is thriving," she tells me. "The scholastic scene continues to grow."

I am in awe of all that Irina has achieved herself in the game, and all she does for others. As the father of four daughters, I could not think of a better role model. Irina's next student has arrived and we start to wrap up. I ask if we might be able to get a photograph that could be used with this piece. Irina is happy to oblige. She calls across to Grandmaster Tamaz Gelashvili who is giving a lesson at another table and asks if he will do the honours. I apologise profusely for misusing a player of his standing in such a way. He laughs and smiles at me warmly, before taking the picture.

I give Irina my thanks and she settles down to her final lesson of the day. As I make my way back on to the street, my head is spinning with games and conversations. Everybody has been so welcoming and given freely of their time. These few blocks around Washington Square and the Marshall Club are a special place for chess players. That New York teems with possibilities and opportunities to learn, to play, to be a part of something is obvious.

I feel that the stories I have read, the images I had in my head as to what this might be like, have been borne out by the reality. What I also think is that this is not just about New York. It is about what the game gives all of us, wherever we happen to be in the world. A common language. The ability to turn strangers into friends. A whole new way of belonging.

Readers' Letters

Joe Bunting & Chesterfield

My late father transferred to Chesterfield with his job in 1945 and we lived there until 1948. I was too young then, between 5 and 8 years of age, to go along to evening chess matches, but did go along to club and county matches on Saturdays and Joe Bunting was a member of the team.

Dr. L.K. Ingram was the Chesterfield top board and his contribution to the fortunes of the club appears on the Chesterfield Club website. I had no idea that Joe Bunting was a problemist until reading Brian Stephenson in the March *CHESS* and thus solving the problem Brian set gave me some special pleasure.

Keith Ingram, Shirley

Smaller Pieces Please!

I enjoyed *Saunders on Chess* in the March issue about medium-size chess pieces. Pressure of work forced me to give up active playing some 20 years ago, but I still play through games and positions.

I have several sets, but like John, I have found a set with a three-inch king and small squares is the right size for home analysis, especially if you only have small space available.

Also, the game John gave in April's *CHESS* was a slight variant on a very ancient trap in the Berlin Defence: **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♘xe4 5 ♖e1 ♘d6 6 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 7 ♖xe5 ♗e7 8 ♘c3**.

We have reached the position given in the diagram on page 58 in April, except the black pawn is on a7 not a6, the black knight on d6 not c5, and the white bishop on b5 not a4. After **8...♘xb5? 9 ♘d5** Black had to resign just six moves later in Bachmann-Fiechtl, Regensberg 1887.

Russell Sparkes, London

Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs - by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

If you thought that Seniors chess was a stroll in the park, just take a look at the photograph of Dominic Gibbs. I have played Mr Gibbs once before (we drew) and I can confirm that he is a charming fellow, but his game face is one right out of *The Shining*. I should imagine that it could be quite terrifying to a youngster, but then again, they never seem to be afraid of anything these days. In any event, there are no juniors in this chess tournament.

'This' is the English Seniors Chess Championships and, despite rather disconcertingly being eligible, I could not commit to four days to play, but decided to attend for one day to take some photographs, so on the Friday I took the short trip to St John's hotel in Solihull. The event organisers were Ed Goodwin, Nigel Towers, Hok Chiu, and Priscilla Morris. If I missed anyone, I apologise. The playing venue was splendid for chess, being light, warm and, most important of all, quiet.

Junior chess players may be fearless, but Seniors are fearsome, loaded as they are with experience, battle scars and wisdom. They are very difficult adversaries and bring all sorts of chess history to the board. Here, one could find games recorded in descriptive notation, whether or not FIDE like it. There was also a clear camaraderie between the protagonists and also between the organising team. Don't get me wrong, my own experience tells me that working with juniors keeps us young in some ways, but now and again it is delightful to talk about Green Shield Stamps, doorstep milk deliveries and Pink Floyd.

Further, senior players seem to better understand the old zen saying that if the mind is not put in one place, it is everywhere. There is much less perambulating between moves than one sees in junior tournaments (perhaps crumbling spinal discs or sciatica limit such optimistic excursions from the board), and there are a lot more fixed expressions and focused minds at the board.

The Mayor of Solihull, Flo Nash, opened the event on the Thursday evening. There was a fine bookstall run by the inimitable Howard Wood, and also live boards which admittedly had some difficulties, but I am sure this will improve next time. Technology is both friend and foe. On display were two sparkling trophies by way of an incentive to battle *with 'herz und seele'*.

Rather unsurprisingly IM Paul Littlewood won the Over-50's section and Kevin Bowmer the Over-65's. Well done to them both. The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

The tournament is reported elsewhere in these august pages, ergo I shall keep it brief and offer one gem from the tournament. This was kindly supplied by Nigel Towers, who I have met over the board several times. On this occasion he was organising proceedings, but I saw that look in his eye which said he would love to have been engaged on the 64 squares.

Walking past the board of Dominic Gibbs, Carl simply had to think: 'Heeeeeeere's Dominic!'

♕ ♕ ♕ ♕ ♕ ♕ ♕ ♕ ♕

Notes by Nigel Towers

I.Myall-A.Slinger
English Over-65 Ch., Solihull 2019
c3 Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘f3 e6 6 cxd4 ♘c6 7 ♗c4 ♘b6 8 ♗b3 d6

Challenging the white centre. All book moves so far and we are following Kasparov-Polgar from 1996.

9 ♕e2

Played to avoid the queen exchange. 9 exd6 ♗xd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘c3 is level.

9...dxe5 10 dxe5 ♗b4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+?!

Playable, but it helps White's development with his knight on its way to d6. 11...0-0 12 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 13 0-0 ♕d3 would be better for Black than the game continuation.

12 ♘bxd2 ♘d4 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4

The queen is not well placed here. Incidentally, this position had been seen before in a Seniors tournament, Rahls-Hohfelder, German Senior Championship, Dresden 2001. There 14 0-0-0 occurred and may have been more to the point than going short, as White is some way ahead in development.

14 0-0 ♗d7

A bit slow. It was safer to castle first rather than play the bishop to the open d-file. Instead, after 14...♕xb2 15 ♖fb1 ♕c3 16 ♖d1 0-0 17 ♖ac1 ♕a5 18 ♕e4 White has good compensation for the pawn.

15 ♖fd1 ♗c6?

This looks slow too and was the critical error by Black, allowing a dangerous discovered attack with the knight continuing on its way to d6 without being exchanged for the one on b6.

15...♕xb2 was once again the best move, pinning the knight for the moment and forcing 16 ♖ab1. After 16...♕a3 Black should be able to castle and continue developing, although White's position is slightly preferable, with good compensation for the pawn.

16 ♘c4 ♕h4

Here 16...♕f4 was better as the queen can exert some more influence and is more difficult for White to eject. Play would likely go 17 ♘d6+ ♔f8 18 g3 or maybe 18 ♖d3 h5 (to allow the rook to develop to g6) 19 ♖ad1 ♖h6.

17 ♘d6+

The octopus knight reaches its outpost on d6 and will win the game from here.

17...♔e7?

The king will become a target here for discovered attacks on the long diagonal. 17...♔f8 was probably safer when the rook can be developed to g6.

18 ♕e3

Aiming to harass the queen with tempo and looking at the dark squares.

18...♘d7

Protecting c5.

19 ♖d4 ♕h5 20 f4!

Protecting the e-pawn and preparing for f4-f5! and/or ♗d1 and ♕a3 followed by a discovered attack on the black king.

20...g6?

Understandable and played to prevent f4-f5 – but the queen is running short of squares. That said, even after 20...♕g6 (threatening mate on g2) 21 ♖d2 ♔f8 22 f5! White would surely have won.

21 ♗d1

Gaining a tempo on the queen and starting the attack on the weakened dark squares.

21...♕h6

Forced.

22 ♕a3 ♕f8

Probably the best move, but Black is already lost.

23 ♘xb7+ ♔e8 24 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24...♔d8 25 ♖c1 ♗d5 26 ♗a4 is equally crushing.

25 ♖c1! 1-0

A nice finish. The bishop has nowhere to go except d5, after which 26 ♖c7 is crushing and wins on the spot.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that there was not one single female competitor. One can speculate as to why this was, but it would certainly be very nice for things to change next year. I mean, there must be senior chess-playing women, must there not? They cannot all be juniors. Let us hope that they can be persuaded to play next year, and so help shatter the illusion that chess is merely a gentlemen's club.

I intend to play next year and I would encourage others to do likewise. Speaking to Ed Goodwin between rounds, it is clear that he has the energy and appetite to run the tournament again, but he will need further support from the chess-playing fraternity and the ECF to make sure that this important event in the English chess calendar continues to flourish.

The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in April

1	=	Reti Opening	*114 games*
2	⇧	Queen's Gambit Declined	*89 games*
3	⇧	Sicilian Najdorf	*83 games*
4	⇧	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	*77 games*
5	⇩	Caro-Kann Defence	*75 games*
6	⇩	King's Indian Defence	*73 games*
7	⇧	Nimzo-Indian Defence	*61 games*
8	⇧	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	*56 games*
9	⇧	English, 1...e6	*53 games*
10	⇩	Slav Defence	*48 games*
11	⇩	English, 1...c5	*47 games*
12	⇧	English, 1...e5	*46 games*
13	⇧	English, 1...♘f6	*43 games*
14	⇩	Ruy Lopez, Berlin Def.	*43 games*
15	⇧	Giuoco Piano	*39 games*
16	⇩	Catalan Opening	*37 games*
17	⇧	Grünfeld Def. Classical	*36 games*
18	⇧	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 sidelines	*35 games*
19	⇩	Queen's Indian Defence	*35 games*
20	⇧	Sicilian Kan	*33 games*

1,940 games played between 1-30 April where both players were rated over 2400 Elo

Source: TWIC. Compiled by *HIARCS 14*.

In association with *HIARCS Chess Explorer* - hiarcs.com and *The Week in Chess* -- theweekinchess.com

Following in Blackburne's Footsteps

Nigel Towers reports from the English Seniors Championships

The English Seniors was relaunched this year at the St John's Hotel, Solihull. The event was organised by Ed Goodwin and myself on behalf of the ECF, and supported by Priscilla Morris and Hok Chiu as arbiters. There were two sections – Over-50's and Over-65's – with six rounds over four days, from Thursday 4th to Sunday 7th April.

It was a strong championship with participants looking to follow in the footsteps of Joseph Henry Blackburne, the Victorian British Champion who famously tied with Frederick Yates for first in the British Championship of 1914 at the age of 72.

The congress was opened on the Thursday evening by the Worshipful the Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Mrs Flo Nash, along with the Mayor's Consort, Alderman Alan Nash. The organisers provided the Mayor with a short tutorial on how the knights and pawns move as preparation for the opening ceremony which she navigated very successfully, playing the requested 1 e4 on the top board in each section.

The congress ran smoothly enough from an organisational perspective. The hotel had been recently refurbished and provided a great environment for competitive chess – the only issues being a bleep every minute from one of the fire exit signs, which we were able to fix after round one, and some debates over the Swiss Manager pairings before publishing in advance of each round.

We were able to publish the pairings and results on the Chess Results server, which we think was appreciated by the participants. We also had four DGT boards in each section, which meant we could broadcast the top games on the internet in real time. There were some excellent and close fought games throughout, including many long-running endgames going over the expected finish times for the rounds given the increments on the time control.

In the Over-50's Paul Littlewood emerged as clear leader going into the last round, where he won his final game with the white pieces against Lee Kay, thereby winning his tournament and becoming English Over-50 champion. In the Over-65s Chris Shepherd and Kevin Bowmer were both on 4½/5 at the start of the last round and both had the black pieces. However Chris's draw with David Anderton gave Kevin the chance to win the tournament. He won his final game against Ivan Myall to become English Over-65 Champion.

Full results from the congress were as follows:

Over-50

1	Paul Littlewood (Wood Green)	5½/6
2-3	Rob Willmoth (Edgware), Mark Josse (West Byfleet)	4½
Performance Prize: Paul Seymour (Staines)		2½
Slow Starter Prize: Dominic Gibbs (Coulsdon), Simon Smith (Warley Quinbourne)		3½.

Over-65

1	Kevin Bowmer (Loughton)	5½/6
2	Chris Shephard (Sheffield)	5
3-4	Mike Surtees (Great Lever), David Anderton (Walsall Kipping)	4½
Performance Prize: Richard Donaghay (Ely)		3½
Slow Starter Prize: Mark Page (Kenilworth)		3½.

Notes by Kevin Bowmer

K.Bowmer-B.Charnley
English Over-65 Ch., Solihull 2019
Sicilian Sveshnikov

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5

7 ♘d5 ♘xd5 8 exd5 is more popular these days, as in several of the Caruana-Carlsen world championship games.

7...a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 ♘d5 ♗g7 11 ♗d3 ♘e7 12 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♕f3

14 c4 is more precise, and if 14...f5 15 ♕f3 d5 16 cxd5 fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♖b8, with a double-edged position.

14...♗e6?

Too slow. Black must attack the centre before White's knight reaches e3. 14...f5! 15 c4 transposes to the above variation.

15 c4 b4 16 ♘c2 a5 17 ♘e3

The knight has reached its ideal square.

17...♖fe8 18 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 19 ♘d5 ♕d8 20 ♖ad1 ♖c5 21 b3 f5

Correctly sacrificing a pawn for some activity, but this move should have been much earlier.

22 exf5 ♗xd5 23 cxd5 ♕f6 24 ♗c4 ♖c7 25 ♖e4 ♖ce7 26 ♗b5 ♖c8 27 ♗c6 ♔h8 28 g3 ♗h6 29 ♕h5 ♕g5 30 ♕xg5 ♗xg5 31 h4

31...♗f6

31...♗h6 32 f6 would be decisive.

32 ♔g2 ♖a7 33 ♔h3 ♗d8 34 g4 f6 35 f4 ♗b6 36 fxe5 dxe5 37 g5 ♗d4 38 ♔g4 ♖g7 39 ♔h5 ♖d8 40 ♖f1 ♖d6 41 ♖g4 ♖g8 42 ♖f3 ♖f8 43 ♖g2 ♗c3 44 ♖e2 ♖g8 45 ♖e4 ♗d4 46 ♖g4 ♖f8 47 ♖f1 ♖g8 48 ♖f3 ♖f8 49 g6 hxg6+ 50 ♖xg6 ♖g8 51 ♖h6+ ♔g7 52 ♖g3+ ♔f8

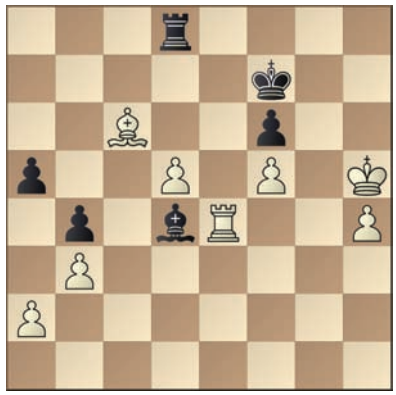
53 ♖gg6?

53 ♖xg8+! ♔xg8 54 ♔g6 is quicker, but you have to see that White's attack is quicker than Black's e-pawn: 54...e4 55 ♖h7 e3 (55...♔f8? 56 ♖h8+ ♔e7 57 ♖e8#) 56 ♖g7+ ♔f8 (or 56...♔h8 57 ♗e8! e2 58 ♗f7 e1♕ 59 ♖h7#) 57 h5 e2 58 h6 e1♖ 59 ♖f7+ ♔g8 60 h7+ ♔h8 61 ♖f8#.

53...e4 54 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 55 ♖g6+

55 ♔g6! is similar to the above line, White winning after 55...e3 56 ♖h7 e2 57 ♖e7.

55...♔f7 56 ♖g4 ♖d8 57 ♖xe4



57...♗f2?

Missing 57...♗e5 to control the d-pawn when Black still has drawing chances.

58 ♔g4 ♖h8 59 ♔f3 ♗xh4

White also wins after 59...♖xh4 60 ♖e6 ♗c5 61 ♗b5.

60 d6 ♖d8 61 d7 1-0

This good fight was the last game to finish in the opening round!

Kevin Bowmer plays for Hackney and Loughton Chess Clubs and was a worthy winner of the English Over-65 Championship.

Getting There!

To win a tournament requires many skills. IM Paul Littlewood was delighted to win the English Over-50 Championship and explains how he managed it

I was pleased to be able to take part in the reintroduction of the English Seniors this year and hope that the tournament will go from strength to strength. It was very well organised by Ed Goodwin and his team and the playing conditions were excellent.

My own tournament began with Black against Ian Deswarte. He surprised me in the opening and won a pawn, but I obtained some compensation and we reached this critical position:

I.Deswarte-P.Littlewood
Round 1

Now the strong move **27...♕h8** turned the tables, winning my pawn back and taking over the initiative. White resigned 12 moves later. The key to Black's position is the powerful knight on e5 which landed there on move 13 and only moved again on move 35 to clinch the game:

28 ♗e2 ♖g8 29 ♕f4 ♖xh4 30 ♕f1 ♕h6 31 ♗d3 ♕xe3 32 ♖e1 ♕c5 33 c4 ♖g3 34 ♔b1 ♖d4 35 ♔c2 ♘xd3 36 ♖xd3 ♕xc4+ 37 ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 38 bxc3 ♕xa2+ 39 ♔c1 ♖d2 0-1

My next opponent, Martin Clancy, wanted to surprise me with an interesting opening choice. However, you can take originality too far and the following miniature ensued:

P.Littlewood-M.Clancy
Round 2
Irregular Benoni

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 e3 ♘c6?! 5 d5 exd5 6 cxd5 ♘e7 7 ♘c3 a6? 8 d6! ♘g6 9 e4 b5 10 e5

10...♘xe5 11 ♘xe5 ♕b6 12 ♕e2 1-0

Round 3 was a tough battle with Black against Mark Josse. After a slightly dubious opening I outplayed him and reached a favourable ending. However time-trouble was looming and I made a mistake in the following position.

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M.Josse-P.Littlewood
Round 3

48...♔c1 wins for Black, although White still has chances to draw. Unfortunately, though, I thought that **48...♘c7?** was more forcing. However after **49 ♘xc7 a3 50 ♘b5 a2** (here I offered a draw, realising what would follow) 51 ♘a3+ ♔c1 52 ♘c2 c4 White can draw with 53 ♘a1.

So now I was half a point behind the tournament leader and needed to avoid any more mistakes if I was going to fight for the title. Round 4 saw me up against Don Mason and I knew it would be a tense battle. He had played the King's Indian against me last time, but this time surprised me with the Grünfeld. I decided to opt for a very sharp line and we reached the following interesting position:

P.Littlewood-D.Mason
Round 4

I am a pawn down, but the black knight is offside and I have a strong centre with the initiative on the kingside. It is Black to move and he must decide how to defend his king's pawn.

16...♕c7 doesn't work because of 17 d6, so the choice lies between 16...♖e8 and 16...f6. He didn't like the former because of 17 ♗b5, but this is the best option. His actual choice of **16...f6?** was a poor decision because after **17 hxg6 hxg6 18 f4** White had a strong attack and Black resigned just 8 moves later:

English Over-65 and Over-50 Champions Kevin Bowmer (left) and Paul Littlewood (right) both scored an impressive 5½/6 in their respective sections. For more about Paul see page 7.

18...♔g7 19 fxe5 b6 20 f4 fxe5 21 fxe5 ♖h8 22 ♔d2 ♕g5+ 23 ♔c2 ♖af8 24 e6+ ♕f6 25 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 26 ♖bf1+ 1-0

Meanwhile Robert Willmoth still had 100%, but we now faced each other in the fifth round. Fortunately I was White, so I could press for a win. After a rather complicated opening, where he had good chances, I managed to win a pawn and obtained the following dominant position:

P.Littlewood-R.Willmoth
Round 5

In desperation he tried **30...♗xh6**, but rather than allow 31 ♕xh6 ♘xg4 with complications, White can play **31 ♘e5** and after **31...♕g7** then **32 ♘gf7** is crushing.

So on to the final round! With Robert now half a point behind me, I needed to win to be sure of first place. Fortunately I was again White, facing Lee Kay and he chose the Dutch Defence. I have some knowledge of the main line theory, but thought it wise to try something different.

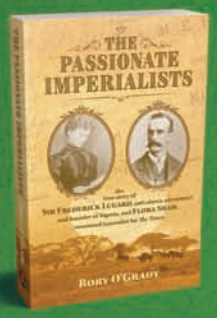
The opening went **1 d4 e6 2 ♘f3 f5 3 ♘c3!?**, which is no better than the main lines, but at least it made my opponent think. I obtained a strong initiative and won a crucial pawn, reaching the following winning position:

P.Littlewood-L.Kay
Round 6

White has several strong moves, including 24 ♕e5. There is a more forcing alternative in 24 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 25 f7 ♖xf7 26 ♕e5+ ♖g7 27 ♖xg7, because if 27...♕xg7 then 28 ♕xb8+ wins. However, Black has the counter 27...♕f1+ and the white king cannot escape perpetual check.

Fortunately, though, there is a simpler alternative and I played **24 ♕g7+! ♕xg7** (not 24...♖xg7 25 fxg7+ ♕xg7 26 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 27 ♖xd7+ and wins) **25 ♖xg7 ♗e8 26 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 27 ♖d7 ♔g8 28 ♗xb7** and my opponent resigned, being two pawns down with a hopeless position.

So first place and a great feeling. Roll on next year!



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A Clever Accident

Does ♗e3 in the Closed Sicilian really attack c5? Junior Tay investigates

While blitzing with IM Hsu Li Yang, I was trying to arranging the standard ♗e3 and ♕d2 set-up in the Closed Sicilian when he made a finger slip and omitted to defend his c-pawn with 6...d6. Of course I grabbed the Sicilian pawn. Nothing wrong with that, I suppose, since Black gets maybe a couple of tempi for it at most. After some tentative moves from me, Hsu demonstrated clear compensation and I was duly ground down in the ending. That surely isn't supposed to happen?

After **1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 0-0** the c-pawn is utterly up for grabs and it would be remiss of White not to take it, wouldn't it?

Well, Dr. Hsu demonstrated, with my help, of course, that White has to play carefully even after the inferior 7 ♗xc5 d6?! not to allow Black's pieces to run riot.

J.Tay-Hsu Li Yang
Singapore (blitz) 2017
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 0-0!? 7 ♗xc5

Li Yang later said he never intended to give the pawn away, but he "pre-moved" castling.

7...d6?!

Black obtains insufficient compensation after this, unlike in the 7...♕a5 line we'll see below. However, clearly I didn't find the right way to exploit the difference and had to deal with a strong black initiative.

8 ♗e3 ♘g4

9 ♗d2?!

White has to return the pawn after this, since he cannot protect the f2- and b2-pawns simultaneously. With the benefit of hindsight, the prudent 9 ♗c1! is best: 9...f5 10 exf5 ♗xf5 11 ♘f3 and Black has some play for the pawn, but it should probably be insufficient.

9...♕b6

Immediately seizing on the loose b2- and f2-pawns to recoup his investment.

10 ♘h3 ♕xb2 11 ♖b1 ♕a3 12 ♖b3?!

12 0-0 ♕a5 with the idea of ...♕d8 is simplest.

12...♕c5 13 ♖b5 ♕a3 14 0-0 ♘d4 15 ♖b1 ♘e5 16 ♘d5 ♗g4! 17 f3 ♘exf3+ 18 ♗xf3 ♘xf3+ 19 ♖xf3 ♗xh3 20 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 21 ♖f4?!

Trying to bring the rook to h4. 21 ♕c1 ♕xa2 22 ♘d5 would have left White with compensation.

21...♗e6!

Stopping my plan cold. I was thinking of 21...♕xa2 22 ♖h4 ♗e6 with some semblance of a kingside attack: for example, 23 ♖b5! with the idea of ♖xh7 and ♕h5+!, or even the ridiculous-looking ♖bh5. Here 23...♖ae8 24 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 25 ♖h5+ ♗h6 26 ♗xh6 gxh5 27 ♕xh5 ♖xe7 28 ♗xf8+ ♔g8 29 ♗xe7 should lead to a draw.

22 ♘d5?

I didn't play 22 ♖h4 because of 22...♗f6, but 22...♖fe8! is even stronger with the idea of 23 ♖xb7 ♖ab8! and White is busted.

22...♗xd5 23 exd5 ♕c5+ 24 ♔g2 ♕xd5+ 25 ♕f3 ♕xf3+?!

Complicating the game unnecessarily. After 25...♕xa2 26 ♕xb7 ♕xc2 27 ♖f2 ♕xd3 Black has three pawns too many.

26 ♔xf3 b6 27 ♖a4 d5 28 ♖e1 ♖fc8 29 c4?! 29 ♖e7 a6 30 c4 ♔g8 31 ♖d7 dxc4 32 ♖xc4 at least gives White active play.

29...dxc4 30 dxc4 ♖c7 31 ♗f4 ♖d7 32 ♖e3 ♖c8 33 ♖ea3 a5 34 ♖b3 ♗d4 35 ♖d3 ♖cd8 36 ♖aa3 ♔g7

37 ♖ab3?!

The last hope was 37 ♖xd4! ♖xd4 38 ♗e5+ ♔f8 39 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 40 c5! bxc5 41 ♖xa5 c4 42 ♖c5 ♖d2 43 h4 ♖xa2 44 ♖xc4 ,with excellent drawing chances.

37...♗c5 38 ♖xd7 ♖xd7

And Black later converted his extra pawn in the ensuing frantic finish.

As I researched the pawn sacrifice, I realised that Black does obtain good compensation for it, with modern engines demonstrating clear plans of how to continue. The real crux of the pawn sacrifice occurs when Black plays 7...♕a5 and after 8 ♗e3, hits back immediately with 8...d5!.

J.Bohak-Z.Krecak
Correspondence 2011
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 g6 3 g3 ♘c6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 0-0!? Can this sacrifice actually work in correspondence chess?

7 ♗xc5

7 h3 d6 (7...b6 is covered in Momo-Littlewood) 8 ♕d2 transposes back into a main line of the 6 ♗e3 Closed Sicilian, which will see in Katz-Mareco, below.

7...♕a5!

A strong tempo-gain to prepare the ...d5 break. It helps that the knight on c3 is pinned in the process.

8 ♗e3 d5!

Black uses his developmental lead to blast open the centre before White can complete development. Thanks to the pin on the c3-knight, the d5-pawn isn't that palatable: 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♗xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♕xd5 12 ♕f3 ♕a5 13 ♗d2 ♕a4 14 ♕d1 ♘e5 with the idea of ...b6 and ...♗b7 offers Black definite compensation. Instead, 9 ♘ge2 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♘g4 11 ♗d2 ♕b6 12 0-0 ♕xb2 13 ♖b1 ♕a3 is about equal.

9 ♗d2 dxe4 10 ♘xe4

After 10 dxe4 ♖d8 11 ♕c1 ♗e6 12 ♘ge2 ♗c4 White is already in trouble.

10...♕b6 11 ♘xf6+

Alternatively, 11 ♗c3 ♘xe4 12 ♗xe4 ♘d4 and Black has sufficient compensation for his pawn thanks to his better development and central control.

11...exf6!

Now White has to deal with pressure down the e-file as well, whereas after 11...♗xf6 12 ♗c3 White would have consolidated. It is imperative that Black opens up the e-file to prevent White from developing smoothly.

12 ♘e2

Black stands well enough too after 12 ♖b1 ♖e8+ 13 ♔f1 (White will go down in flames after 13 ♘e2? ♗g4 14 ♗e3 ♖xe3! and Black calmly piles up before crashing through: 15 fxe3 ♖e8! 16 h3 ♗xe2 17 ♔xe2 ♕xe3+ 18 ♔f1 ♘d4 19 ♕e1 ♘e2 20 ♕f2 ♘xg3+ 21 ♔g1 ♕e5 and White is practically lost with ...♗h6-e3 looming) 13...♘d4.

12...♗g4!

More challenging than allowing White to hold the balance with 12...♕xb2 13 ♗c3 ♕a3 14 ♕c1.

13 ♗e3 ♕xb2 14 0-0 ♖fe8 15 ♖b1?!

Even though White improves his fianchettoed bishop's diagonal and activates this rook, Black's central and kingside initiative will now just keep on increasing. It was more prudent to lend support to the bishop on e3 with 15 ♕d2 ♗xe2 16 ♕xe2 ♘d4 17 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 18 ♕d2, when White should be OK.

15...♕xa2 16 ♖xb7 ♘e5! 17 h3 ♗f3 18 ♘c3

18...♗xg2!

A stunning continuation. The liquidating attempt with 18...♗xd1 19 ♘xa2 ♗xc2 runs into 20 ♘b4 ♗xd3 21 ♘xd3 ♘xd3 22 ♗d5 when White's powerful bishop-pair can nullify the outside passed pawn.

19 ♘xa2

White is suffering too after 19 ♔xg2 ♕e6! 20 ♖c7 ♖ec8 21 ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 22 ♘e4 ♕c6.

19...♗xb7 20 f3 a5

Black has bishop and rook for White's queen, and there are the small matters of the passed a-pawn and his superb control of the long light-square diagonal.

21 d4

Alternatively, 21 ♗d4 f5 22 ♗c3 ♖ac8 23 ♗xe5 (and not 23 ♗xa5?? ♖a8*)* 23...♗xe5 24 ♔g2 g5 and Black is the more comfortable here.

21...♖ed8 22 ♔g2

22 ♘c3 ♘c4 23 ♕d3 ♖ac8 is another squeeze.

22...♘c4

There is nothing but suffering in sight for White, as there is no good plan to improve his position at all.

23 ♗f4 g5 24 ♗c1 a4 25 c3 a3 26 ♕c2

26 ♖e1 ♗d5 27 ♕c2 ♘b6 also leaves Black clearly for choice.

26...♖e8 27 ♕b1 ♖ab8 28 ♔f2 ♗a6 29 ♘b4 ♗f8 30 ♕a1 ♗xb4 31 cxb4 ♖xb4 32 d5

Finally White has found something active to do, but it is a classic case of too little, too late.

32...♔g7 33 h4 h6 34 hxg5

34 d6 ♖b3 35 d7 ♖d8 is hopeless too.

34...hxg5 35 d6 ♖b3 36 d7 ♖d8 37 ♖d1 ♘e5 0-1

White had suffered enough and threw in the towel. The game might have continued 38 ♗xa3 ♖xf3+ 39 ♔g1 ♖xg3+ 40 ♔f2 ♖d3 41 ♖xd3 ♘xd3+ (41...♗xd3?! 42 ♗b2 ♖xd7 43 ♗xe5 fxe5 44 ♕xe5+ f6 45 ♕e8 isn't so effective) 42 ♔g1 ♖xd7 43 ♗b2 ♘xb2 44 ♕xb2 ♗c4 45 ♔f2 ♗e6 46 ♕a1 ♖d3 47 ♕b2 ♖h3 48 ♕a1 ♔g6 49 ♕c1 f5 50 ♕b1 ♔h5 51 ♔g2 ♖e3 and so on. White cannot deal with the advancing pawns and there is no perpetual check forthcoming.

With the help of modern engines, Black is able to prove prolonged compensation for the pawn whether White, after 7...♕a5! 8 ♗e3 d5, captures on d5 or leaves the pawn alone. As such, I felt that the key to the matter was to see if Black could take advantage of White's non-compliance in taking the gambit pawn without moving back into the main lines of the Closed Sicilian, where Black plays ...d6.

In our next game White plays a very early 5 ♗e3 which is met by 5...♘f6!?, again sacrificing the c-pawn. It seems dangerous to take the pawn according to modern engines, but more practical examples are needed. In any case, the game soon transposed to an ...e6 and ...d5 line where White made the standard d2-d4 push after trading on d5.

J.Klinger-N.Birnboim
Munich Zonal 1987
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 d3 ♗g7 5 ♗e3

This clever move order has been played by Krasenkov, Ljubojevic and Gormally, but can Black sacrifice the c-pawn all the same?

5...♘f6!?

An even earlier pawn sacrifice than before, but the idea is similar.

The point of an early ♗e3 as opposed to 5 ♗g2 is to effect a quick kingside pawn rush, saving on the bishop development until it is necessary. For example, 5...d6 6 ♕d2 ♘f6 7 ♗h6 0-0 8 h4 ♘d4?! 9 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 10 h5, as in Maiorov-Shovunov, Krasnodar 1998.

6 ♗g2!

Accepting the gambit pawn here is even more dangerous than in the line one move later as the light-square weaknesses in White's kingside are more apparent after 6 ♗xc5 d5!:

a) 7 ♖b1 d4 (even 7...0-0 8 ♗g2 ♗e6 9 a4 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♕a5 11 b4 likely favours Black after 11...♕a6 12 ♘ge2 ♖fd8 13 ♘d5 ♕c4) 8 ♘ce2 ♘d7 9 ♗a3 b5 10 ♕d2 ♕b6 11 b3 f5 (11...♕a6!? might be even stronger, and if 12 ♕c1 f5 13 ♗g2 fxe4 14 ♗xe4 0-0) 12 ♗g2 0-0 gives Black more than enough compensation.

b) 7 exd5 ♘xd5 and now most definitely not 8 ♘ge2?? (8 d4 gives Black a souped-up Grünfeld-type position: 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 b6 10 ♗a3 ♗b7 11 ♗g2 ♕c7, which threatens ...♘xd4 already and 12 ♔f1 0-0 gives him a huge lead in development) 8...♘xc3! 9 ♘xc3 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♕d5 when White can resign.

c) 7 ♗g2 d4 8 ♘d5 (not 8 ♘ce2? ♕a5+ and Black is already better after 9 b4 ♘xb4 10 ♗xb4 ♕xb4+) 8...♘xd5 9 exd5 ♕a5+

Israeli IM Nathan Birnboin was happy to sacrifice c5 long before computers approved.

10 ♕d2 ♕xc5 11 dxc6 bxc6 and Black must be happy with his bishop-pair.

d) 7 ♕d2 dxe4 8 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 9 dxe4 ♕xd2+ 10 ♔xd2 ♗xb2 and White is suffering badly.

e) 7 ♘ge2?! d4 (7...dxe4 8 ♗g2 ♕a5 is also much better for Black) 8 ♘b1 ♕a5+ 9 b4 ♘xb4 10 ♗xb4 ♕xb4+ and Black already has the advantages of a Sicilian (a weak white c-pawn) without much fuss.

6...♕a5?!

Black is set on playing the position without 'wasting' a move with 6...d6. 6...0-0 is the main line, which we'll come to below.

The game position can also be reached after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 ♕a5. This move gave me pleasant memories of a win over Luxembourg FM Hubert Mossong more than two decades ago, in a final round money game. He had beaten me all week with the ♗e3 and ♕d2 Closed Sicilian in multiple blitz games at three different chess clubs around Singapore, but for the crucial tournament game, I stopped him from his automatic ♗e3, ♕d2 and ♗h6 idea: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g7 ♗g7 5 d3 e6 6 ♗e3 ♕a5!? 7 ♕d2 ♘d4, forcing him to think over the board and eventually time pressure took its toll. For that matter, *Starting Out: Closed Sicilian* demonstrated two good ways for White of handling this 5....e6 and 6...♕a5 line: an early f2-f4 and e4-e5 pawn hit, or a2-a3 and ♖b1, side-stepping the long diagonal tricks.

7 ♘ge2 0-0 8 0-0 e6

Trying to avoid 'wasting' a move with 8...d6 and playing for ...d5.

9 h3!? d5?

This looks thematic. However, White is quite well placed to react with a central counter of his own. Probably Black can consider 9...♖d8, but I think White has dealt with the black move order sufficiently well to claim an advantage in any case.

10 exd5 ♘xd5

10...exd5 11 d4 also favours White.

11 ♘xd5 exd5 12 d4!

The point and not 12 ♗xd5? ♗xh3 when Black has effortlessly completed development while obtaining the advantage.

12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♕b4

Forcing White's hand, as he has to resolve the matter of the loose b2-pawn and d4-knight.

14 ♘b3!

After 14 ♖b1 ♘xd4 15 c3 ♕c4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 18 cxd4 ♗e6 White has only a tiny pull.

14...♗xb2?!

This only helps White's development. Black is also worse after the superior 14...d4! 15 c3 dxc3 16 ♗c5 ♕c4 17 ♗d5 c2 18 ♕d2 ♕b5 19 a4 ♕a6 20 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 21 ♕xc2, although at least he has some attacking chances here.

15 ♗c5?!

Tit for tat. However, White has entered an unnecessary tactical melee when he had a safer way to keep his advantage. Indeed, White would be in the driving seat after the stronger 15 ♖b1! ♕c3 16 ♘c5 ♗a3 17 ♖b3 ♕a5 18 ♘xb7.

15...♕c3 16 ♗xf8 ♗xa1 17 ♗h6 ♗b2 18 ♕xd5 ♗a3

White also maintains the edge after 18...♗f5 19 ♕b5 ♖b8 20 ♖d1.

19 ♖d1?!

This allows Black to complete development and he is better structurally. White does better to continue pressing with 19 ♕b5! ♗f8 (not 19...♕xc2?? 20 ♖e1! and

Black is lost) 20 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 21 ♖d1.

19...♗e6 20 ♕b5

20...♗f8!

Side-stepping 20...♕xc2?? 21 ♖d2 ♕b1+ 22 ♔h2 and there is no good way to prevent ♕xb7 with a winning position.

21 ♕xb7 ♖d8 22 ♖xd8 ♘xd8 23 ♕b8 ♗xh6 24 ♕xd8+ ♗f8

Black's bishop-pair offers him sufficient compensation for the pawn.

25 ♕d1 a5 26 a4 ♗f5 27 ♘d4 ♗d7 28 ♘e2 ♕c8

29 ♘f4?

There isn't sufficient justification to allow Black an outside passed pawn. It was necessary to play 29 c4!? ♕xc4 (likewise, after 29...♗xh3 30 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 31 ♕d5 the chances are even) 30 ♕xd7 ♕xe2 31 ♗d5 ♕e7.

29...♗xa4 30 ♕d4?

White's game has simply gone to pieces, but he is suffering anyway after 30 ♗e4 ♕c4 31 ♘d5 ♗c5.

30...♕xc2 31 ♘d5?

31 ♕e5 ♕f5 32 ♕b8 puts up some fight, but is probably lost anyway.

31...♕d1+!

Now it's all over immediately as nothing can stop the Albert the runner.

32 ♕xd1 ♗xd1 33 ♘c3 ♗b3 34 ♗c6 ♗b4 35 ♘a4 ♔f8 36 ♔f1 ♗c4+ 37 ♔g2 ♔e7 38 ♔f3 ♗e6 39 ♘b6 ♗xh3 0-1

The next game investigates what happens if White eschews the pawn with 7 h3, a useful move in the Closed Sicilian anyway. Black will need to hold his c-pawn by then so we look at Littlewood's 7....b6 (by transposition), since Black is trying to save a move on 7...d6 to maintain the possibility of ...d7-d5 in one move. Unfortunately, the subsequent 2006 British Senior Champion timed his ...d5 break prematurely and the Mongolian Master conducted the rest of the game impeccably.

The father of the current England Over-50 Champion, John Littlewood (1931-2009), played in two Olympiads and is pictured giving a simul. Perhaps a reader can identify where?

S.Momo-J.Littlewood
Varna Olympiad 1962
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 b6

Of course our interest in this game stems from possibility of meeting 6...0-0 7 h3 with 7...b6.

7 h3 0-0 8 ♕d2 ♗b7

9 ♗h6

If instead 9 ♘ge2 d5! 10 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 ♘d4 with good play for Black: 12 c4 ♘xe2 13 ♕xe2 (13 ♔xe2 e6 14 ♖he1 exd5 15 ♔f1 ♕c8 16 ♖e2 dxc4 17 dxc4 ♗xg2+ 18 ♔xg2 is about even) 13...e6 14 0-0 exd5 15 ♖ad1 ♖e8 16 b3 ♕d7 17 ♕d2 d4 with equal chances.

9...♘d4?!

A premature move. Black can consider 9...♗xh6!? 10 ♕xh6 and only now 10...♘d4 11 ♕d2 (11 0-0-0 b5 looks quite quick for Black) 11...e5 12 ♘ge2 d5 13 0-0-0 and I quite like Black's space advantage

10 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 11 ♘ce2

White might also mobilise his centre with 11 f4 d5 12 e5 ♘e8 13 0-0-0, with the better chances.

11...d5?

The timing of the ...d5 break is askew as this allows a cramping e4-e5 move which renders Black's king bereft of the natural defender on f6. Black can put up better resistance with 11...e5 12 f4 ♕e7 13 0-0-0 d5, when his chances are not worse.

12 e5 ♘d7 13 ♘xd4 cxd4 14 f4 f6

Insufficient too is 14...♘b8 15 ♘f3 ♘c6 16 0-0-0 ♖c8 17 h4 h5 18 ♗h3 ♖c7 19 f5 and White crashes through.

15 ♘f3 fxe5 16 fxe5 ♕c7

The typical French exchange sacrifice is to no avail either: 16...♖xf3 17 ♗xf3 ♘xe5 18 ♖f1 is still winning for White.

17 0-0

17 0-0-0 ♘xe5 18 ♘xd4 ♖f6 19 ♖he1 also gives White a large advantage.

17...♘xe5 18 ♘xd4 ♕d6 19 ♕e3 ♖xf1+ 20 ♖xf1 ♘f7 21 ♘e6+ ♔g8 22 h4

22 ♖e1! leaves Black completely trussed up.

22...d4?

Black loses patience and decides to jettison a pawn for activity. He would still be suffering after 22...♖e8 23 ♖e1 ♗c8 24 d4.

23 ♕xd4 ♕xe6 24 ♗xb7 ♖d8 25 ♕f2 ♘d6 26 ♗g2 ♘f5 27 ♗h3

Black has done well to hang on thus far, but there is no respite after his next error.

27...♖d5??

The last chance to hold out was 27...♖f8, but after 28 g4 ♕e3 29 ♗g2! ♕xf2+ 30 ♖xf2 ♘xh4 31 ♗d5+ ♔g7 32 ♖xf8 ♔xf8 33 ♔f2 the bishop is clearly superior to the knight in this ending.

28 g4! ♕e3

Saving the piece but not the game.

29 gxf5 ♕xh3 30 fxg6 ♕g4+ 31 ♔h2 1-0

Finally, if White ignores the pawn long enough, Black might as well move back into the main line and so let's have a look at how things generally develop in such a tussle.

A.Katz-S.Mareco
Internet (rapid) 2017
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 d6 3 g3 ♘f6 4 ♗g2 g6 5 d3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 0-0 7 h3 ♘c6 8 ♕d2

The 'clever accident' route to this position is 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 0-0 7 h3 d6 (instead of Littlewood's 7...b6) 8 ♕d2.

8...♖b8

The standard way for Black to launch a counterattack in the Closed Sicilian.

9 ♘ge2 b5 10 0-0 b4

Katz also faced 10...♘d7 in another game in the 2017 PRO League on chess.com: 11 ♗h6 ♗xh6 12 ♕xh6 b4 13 ♘d5 ♘d4 14 ♕d2 ♘xe2+ 15 ♕xe2 ♘b6 16 ♘e3 ♘a4 17 ♖ab1 ♗e6 18 f4! ♘b6 (18...f6 19 f5 ♗f7 was safer) 19 f5! ♗xa2? 20 ♖a1 b3 and now in Katz-Dominguez Perez, Internet (rapid) 2017, 21 h4! a5 22 ♗h3 ♘d7 23 fxg6 hxg6 24 h5 g5 25 ♘c4 a4 26 ♕e3 f6 27 ♗e6+ would have led to the better chances for White.

11 ♘d1 a5

Extremely direct play by the Argentine GM. Black simply gets on with his queenside expansion.

12 f4

Vuckovic indicated that 12 ♗h6 ♘d4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 f4 e5 15 ♔h2 ♘h5 was equal in Rublevsky-Khairullin, Moscow 2006.

12...♗b7 13 g4 ♘d7 14 f5 ♘de5 15 ♗h6 ♘d4

There is something very economical about the way Black is playing. He doesn't waste moves on finesses and just gets on with business by developing and quietly taking central outposts after White's f4-f5 charge.

16 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 17 ♘e3 g5?

This seems like a reflex action to stem the attack, but Katz's counter is well founded. As such, safer was 17...♘xe2+! 18 ♕xe2 f6 with roughly equal chances.

18 f6+!

Clearing the f5- and h5-squares for the knight. The f1-rook also becomes active and the light squares around the black king are weakened.

18...exf6 19 ♘g3

After 19 ♘xd4?! cxd4 20 ♘f5+ ♔h8 21 ♘g3 d5! 22 exd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♘e4 ♕c6 White cannot take on f6 because of 25 ♖xf6?? ♕xf6 26 ♘xf6 ♘f3+.

19...♘d7 20 ♘d5?!

A purposeful trade offer to clear the e4-square for the bishop, but Black would find it much harder to fend off White's initiative after 20 ♘h5+ followed by doubling rooks on the f-file.

20...♔h8! 21 ♘h5 ♗xd5 22 exd5 ♖e8 23 ♖ae1 ♖xe1 24 ♖xe1

24...a4

Black had a counter-clearance sacrifice to wrest back the f6-square for a knight with 24...f5! 25 c3 ♘b5 26 gxf5 ♘f6 27 ♘g3 ♕g8, with even chances.

25 c3 bxc3 26 bxc3 ♘b5 27 ♗e4 ♕a5?

It is extremely risky to move the queen away from the defence of the kingside.

28 ♖c1 a3? 29 ♕f2!

A clever idea, setting up a sneaky tactic as well as preparing to run riot on the kingside light squares.

29...♕d8

Practically forced as after 29...♘xc3?? 30 ♕e1 the knight is toast.

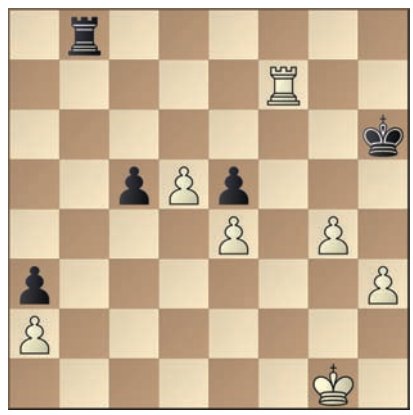
30 ♕f5! ♘f8 31 ♘xf6

The white knight goes on a rampage, munching three pawns on the go.

31...♘g6 32 ♘xh7 ♕e7 33 ♘xg5 ♔g7 34 ♖f1

The simplest way – the hoover approach. 34 ♘e6+ ♔g8 35 ♖b1 would be a stylish way to win: 35...♖b7 36 ♕g5! and after the queen trade, c3-c4 hitting the pinned knight cannot be prevented.

34...♘xc3 35 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 36 ♖xf7+ ♔h6 37 ♘f3 ♘xe4 38 dxe4 ♘e5 39 ♘xe5 dxe5



The endgame is winning for White, but then again, we have a rook ending and in a quickplay finish the errors are just waiting to be made.

40 d6

40 ♖f3 ♖b1+ 41 ♖f1 and now 41...♖b2 will not distract White from 42 ♖d1! with an easy win.

40...♖d8 41 ♖a7?

Complicating the win. Now it actually becomes quite random. 41 ♖f6+ ♔g5 42 ♖f5+ ♔g6 43 ♖xe5 ♖xd6 44 ♖xc5 ♖d2 45 ♖a5 ♖xa2 46 h4 is an easy win again.

41...♖xd6 42 ♖xa3 ♔g5

The black king is now very active and that makes conversion a big problem.

43 ♖f3 ♔h4 44 a4?! ♖d4?!

44...c4! would have secured the draw for Black: 45 ♖c3 ♖a6 46 ♖xc4 ♔xh3 is equal and 45 ♔f2 ♖d2+ 46 ♔e3 c3 47 ♖f8 ♖d4! 48 a5 ♖c4 49 ♖f1 ♖a4 50 ♔d3 ♖xa5 51 ♔xc3 ♖a3+ 52 ♔c4 ♖xh3 53 ♔d5 ♔xg4 54 ♔xe5 a book draw.

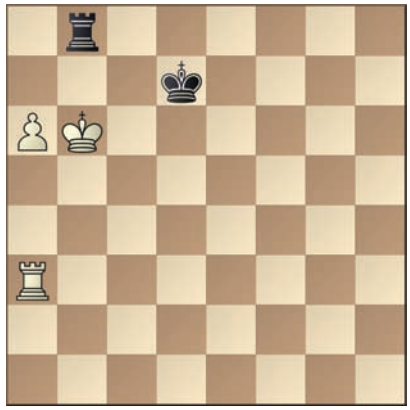
45 ♖a3! ♖xe4 46 a5 ♖b4 47 a6 ♖b8 48 ♔f2 c4 49 ♔e3?

White wins after 49 a7 ♖a8 50 ♔e3 ♔g5 51 ♔e4 c3 52 ♔d3.

49...♔xh3??

Missing 49...♖b3+! 50 ♖xb3 cxb3 51 ♔d2 e4 52 a7 e3+ 53 ♔xe3 b2 54 a8♕ b1♕ and despite the two-pawn advantage, Black should be able to draw fairly easily since the white king is so exposed and, yes, the endgame tablebase says so too.

50 ♔e4+ ♔xg4 51 ♔xe5 ♖a8 52 ♔d4 ♔f5 53 ♔xc4 ♔e6 54 ♔c5 ♔d7 55 ♔b6 ♖b8+



56 ♔a7?

Throwing away the win. Now the Argentinean GM had no problem securing the draw.

Correct was 56 ♔a5! ♖a8 57 ♖g3 ♔c7 58 ♖g7+ ♔c6 59 a7 ♖h8 60 ♔a6 ♖f8 61 ♖g2 ♔c7 62 ♖c2+ ♔d6 63 ♔b7 ♖f7+ 64 ♔b8 and White wins.

56...♖b1 57 ♖c3 ♔d8 58 ♖c2 ♔d7 59 ♖h2 ♔c7 60 ♖h7+ ♔c6 61 ♖b7 ♖a1 62 ♖b2 ♔c7 63 ♖c2+ ♔d7 64 ♖c3 ♖a2 65 ♖c4 ♖a1 66 ♖c2 ♖a3 67 ♔b6 ♖b3+ 68 ♔a5 ♖a3+ 69 ♔b5 ♖a1 70 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 71 ♔a7 ♖a1 72 ♖c3 ♖a2 73 ♖c4 ♖a1 74 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 75 ♔a7 ♖a1 76 ♖c5 ♔d6 77 ♖c8 ♔d7 78 ♖g8 ♔c7 79 ♖g7+ ♔c6 80 ♖g6+ ♔c7 81 ♖h6 ♖a2 82 ♖h7+ ♔c6 83 ♖h6+ ♔c7 84 ♖h7+ ♔c6 85 ♖h1 ♔c7 86 ♖c1+ ♔d7 87 ♖c4 ♖a1 88 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 89 ♔a5 ♖a1+ 90 ♔b5 ♖b1+ 91 ♔a5 ♖a1+ 92 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 93 ♔a7 ♖a1 ½-½

In conclusion it seems Black has sufficient play for the pawn after 1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 (or 4 d3 ♗g7 5 ♗e3 ♘f6!?) 4...♗g7 5 d3 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 0-0!?. Moreover, this line is quite unsettling for White to deal with as, after all, he is expecting a quiet build-up in the Closed Sicilian and suddenly has to contend with an early central skirmish. White's most sensible approach is 7 h3, aiming to get back to the standard business without having to deal with unnecessary complications.

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BOLTON – Joseph McPhillips gained revenge for being defeated by Mike Surtees in the final round of last year's Bolton Congress when the same pairing occurred again this year (19-21 April).
Open: 1 Joseph McPhillips (Bolton) 5/5, 2-6 Martin Goodger (Ely), Tim Hilton (Oldham), Don Mason (Shirley & Wythall), Joao Rita (Wallasey), Simeon Sakic (Bolton) 3½.
Major: 1 Martin Burns (Stockport) 4½, 2-3 Michael Fisher (Oldham), Dean Hartley (Amber Valley) 4.
Knights: 1 Arpad Busznyak (Bolton) 4½, 2-4 Paul Gelder (Alwoodley), Parshottambhi Patel (Bolton), Andrew Swales (Burnley) 4.
Busy Persons Blitz: 1-2 Stephen Gordon (Wood Green), Joseph McPhillips (Bolton) 7/8, 3 Martyn Goodger (Ely) 6½.

CARDIFF – Tim Kett secured his fourth national title at the Welsh Chess Championships, held over the Easter weekend in north Cardiff (19-22 April).
Championship: 1 Tim Kett (Cardiff) 5½/7, 2-5 Tom Brown (Reading), Jason Garcia (Llanelli), David Jameson (Colwyn Bay), David Sands (Barking) 4½; Welsh Under-21 and Ladies Champion: Imogen Camp (Colwyn Bay) 4.
Open-Major: 1 Thomas Van Veelan (Swansea) 5½, 2-4 David Roberts, Charles Summers (both Cardiff), Chris Timmins (Bristol) 5.
Minor: 1 Ryan Cheung (Cardiff) 6, 2 Neil Stuart (Port Talbot) 5, 3-4 Chris Peters Marcel Vesz (both Cardiff) 4.

Kett began with 4½/5 ahead of cruising home with two draws. His opening round encounter showed him at his aggressive best.

T.Kett-G.Yeo
Welsh Championship, Cardiff 2019
Closed Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 g3 ♖b8 4 ♗g2 b5 5 d3 e6?!

This rather asks for trouble. 5...d6 6 ♗e3 g6 is a safer choice.

6 a3!? g6 7 ♗e3 ♘d4 8 b4

Creative play from Kett, but there was nothing wrong with the conventional 8 ♘ce2 ♗g7 9 c3 ♘xe2 10 ♘xe2 d6 11 d4, with a very pleasant edge.

8...♗g7 9 bxc5?

Consistent with his early queenside advance, but he should really have nudged the rook away from a1.

9...♘f3+?

Now White's strategy is rewarded. Black needed to find 9...♕a5 10 ♗d2 b4!, and if 11 ♘ce2 (naturally not 11 axb4?? ♕xa1!) 11...♘xc2+! 12 ♕xc2 ♗xa1 13 ♗xb4 ♖xb4! 14 axb4 ♕xb4+ 15 ♕d2 ♕xc5 when he certainly cannot be worse.

10 ♘xf3 ♗xc3+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xa1 12 ♕xa1

White has all the dark squares and a pawn for the exchange – far more than enough compensation.

12...f6 13 0-0 ♗b7 14 ♘h4 ♔f7 15 f4 ♘e7 16 ♗c3 ♘c6 17 d4 ♖e8 18 f5!?

The more straightforward 18 d5 exd5 19 exd5 ♘a5 20 g4 would also have been rather effective.

18...gxf5?

White's centre is a sight to behold after 18...exf5 19 g4 ♕e7! 20 gxf5 g5, but Black had to try this.

19 d5 ♘a5

20 ♘xf5!

Olé! Black will find himself a whole rook ahead, but fittingly is completely undone on the dark squares.

20...exf5 21 ♖xf5 ♖e7 22 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 23 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 24 ♖g5+ 1-0

EDINBURGH – We reported last month on the successful Edinburgh Congress. There the £50 best game prize was shared between Danny Gormally and Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant for their final round draw, which saw "Spectators three deep trying to watch this epic".

D.Gormally-K.Arakhamia-Grant
Edinburgh 2019
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d3 ♕e7 8 ♘d2 ♘f6 9 ♘c4 ♗e6 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♗xe5 12 ♖e1 0-0-0 13 ♘g5 ♕d6 14 ♘xe6 ♗xh2+ 15 ♔h1 fxe6 16 g3 ♗xg3?

16...♖hf8! was a better way to sacrifice, and if 17 ♕e2 (or 17 ♗f4 ♖xf4 18 gxf4 ♕xf4 19 ♖xe6 ♕h6 with full compensation for the exchange) 17...♗xg3 18 fxg3 ♕xg3 19 ♗e3 ♖d5 20 ♕g2 ♕h4+ 21 ♔g1 ♖ff5 when White is perhaps fortunate that after 22 ♕e4! Black has nothing better than a repetition.

17 fxg3 ♕xg3 18 ♖e3 ♕h4+ 19 ♔g2 ♖hf8 20 ♕e2 ♕g5+ 21 ♖g3 ♕d5+ 22 ♔g1 ♖f5

23 c4

The simpler 23 ♗e3 would also have left Black with three pawns and not quite enough for the piece.

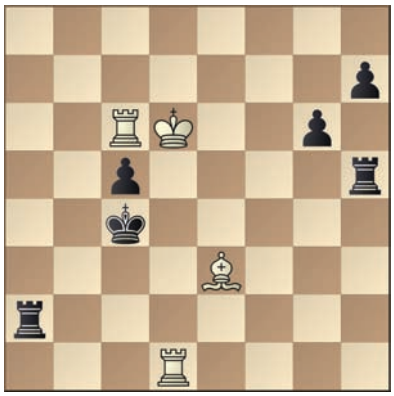
23...♕d4+ 24 ♔g2 ♖e5 25 ♗e3

The alternative was 25 ♕f2 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 27 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 28 ♔xf3 ♖e1 29 b3, with decent winning chances.

25...♕xd3 26 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 27 ♔f2 ♖h5 28 ♔e2 ♖d7 29 ♖f1 b6 30 ♖f6 ♖h2+ 31 ♗f2 ♖h1 32 ♖g1 ♖h2 33 ♔e3 ♔b7 34 b3 e5 35 ♔e4 ♖d2 36 ♗e3 ♖xa2 37 ♖f7+ ♔a6!

Both involving the black king and keeping it safe.

38 ♖d1 ♔a5 39 ♖xa7+ ♔b4 40 ♖b7 ♔xb3 41 ♖xb6+ ♔xc4 42 ♖xc6 ♖h4+ 43 ♔xe5 ♖h5+ 44 ♔d6



Black has defended very well thus far and now after 44...♖f5!? 45 ♗xc5 ♖f6+ 46 ♔d7 ♖xc6 47 ♔xc6 h5 48 ♖g1 ♖a8 she also most likely would have been able to avoid defending just rook against rook and bishop.

44...♖a8 45 ♖c1+ ♔d3 46 ♗xc5 ♔e4 47 ♖e1+ ♔f3 48 ♗b6 ♖a3 49 ♔e7 ♖f5 50 ♖h1 ♖h5 51 ♖f1+ ♔g2 52 ♖g1+ ♔h3 53 ♗c7 ♖e3+ 54 ♔d7 ♖d5+ 55 ♔c8 ♖ed3 56 ♖h1+ ♔g4 57 ♖xh7 g5

Gormally has done well to win two pawns, but his coordination remains an issue and the g-pawn will save the day for Black.

58 ♖h1 ♖d1 59 ♖h8 ♖1d3 60 ♖f8 ♖d1 61 ♗b6 ♖1d3 62 ♖h8 ♖d6 63 ♖c4+ ♔f5 64 ♔b7 ♖d7+ 65 ♔c8 ♖7d6 66 ♗c7 ♖6d4 67 ♖c6 ♖d5 68 ♖f8+ ♔g4 69 ♖e6 ♖c3 70 ♖f7 ♖dc5 71 ♔b7 ♖b3+ 72 ♗b6 ♖f5 73 ♖d7 ♖fb5 74 ♖d1 ♔f5 75 ♖c6 g4 76 ♔c7 g3 77 ♗d4 ♖d5 78 ♖f1+ ♔g4 79 ♖c4 ♖d3 80 ♗c5+ ♔h3 81 ♖h1+ ♔g2 82 ♖g1+ ♔f3 83 ♖c2 ♖d1 84 ♖c3+ ♖5d3 85 ♖xd1 ♖xc3 86 ♔d6 ♖xc5! 87 ♔xc5 g2 88 ♔d4 ♔f2 89 ♖d2+ ½-½

Danny Gormally was frustrated by stiff resistance in the final round at Edinburgh.

EXMOUTH – Bob Jones reports from the West of England Championships (19-22 April):

"The presence of a grandmaster or two in a relatively small provincial event can be guaranteed to raise the interest level and attract further entries. In recent years this function has been provided for the West of England Championship by locally-based Keith Arkell. This year, however, he was unavailable, playing instead in the World Seniors' events on the island of Rhodes, so interest focussed on Matthew Turner, resident chess master at Millfield School in Somerset. Already a five-time West of England Champion, Matthew was no stranger to the event nor the venue, but this year was able to accompany two of his pupils.

"Matthew has clearly been on-form recently, after his showing at the very strong Bunratty tournament in February, coming third with David Howell. He was streets ahead of the opposition in Exmouth, and predictably finished on 7/7, but had to work hard in some of his games, especially in the final round against Richard McMichael. However, he did get chances to shine, as in his entertaining miniature from round 5 against the joint runner-up."

Open: 1 Matthew Turner (Street) 7/7, 2-3 Dominic Mackle (Torquay), Patryk Krzyzanowski (South Bristol) 4½.

Major: 1 Yasser Tello (Wimbledon) 5½, 2-4 Stephen Mitchell (Slough), Jamie Morgan (Cornwall), Matthew Wilson (Teignmouth) 5.

Minor: 1 Patrick O'Brien (Worthing) 5½, 2 Jason Madden (Leamington Spa) 5, 3-4 Ken Alexander (East Budleigh), Jacquie Barber-Lafon (Newton Abbot) 4½.

Notes by Matthew Turner

M.Turner-P.Kryzyzanowski
Exmouth 2019
Sicilian Hyper-Accelerated Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♕xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♕a4

This line seems surprisingly challenging for Black. The most obvious approach leads to a small but enduring advantage for White after 6...d6 7 e5 dxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♗d7 (8...♗g7 is a more ambitious alternative) 9 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 10 ♗e3. Patryck attempts a more interesting idea, but it looks a bit dubious.

The new West of England Champion, Matthew Turner, who racked up a full house, receives his trophy at Exmouth from the West of England Ladies Champions, Jacquie Barber-Lafon.

6...♗g7 7 e5 ♘g8 8 ♗f4 f6 9 exf6

I considered 9 e6, which looks very dangerous, but I'd probably need to invest a piece to maintain the attack which seemed a bit unnecessary.

9...♘xf6

After the game, I was amazed to learn this position had been played by both Ponomariov and Zvjaginsev as Black. I was also a little surprised that their opponents had opted for 10 ♗c4. In principle this seems wrong, because it leaves the bishop on f4 undefended and brings the possibility of ...♕a5 more into play.

10 0-0-0 ♘h5

Again this is probably a bit ambitious. 10...0-0 should probably be preferred when Black can try to spread merry chaos by, for example, 11 ♘g5 d5 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♕b6.

11 ♘b5 ♘xf4 12 ♕xf4 d6 13 ♗c4 ♖f8 14 ♕g3

Originally I had intended 14 ♕e3 here, which is the computer's preferred move, but I didn't see a clear way to proceed after 14...♖f6. The computer seems to think Black can get away with 14...a6 after the text, but it looks incredibly risky.

14...♘e5?

Allowing rather a pretty tactic.

15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♕xe5! dxe5 17 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 18 ♖d1+ ♗d7

Not many attacking pieces left, but enough for mate after 18...♔e819 ♘c7#.

19 ♗e6 a6 20 ♖xd7+ ♔c8 21 ♘d6+! 1-0

The last little tactic. The game just about stumbles on after 21 ♖xe7+ ♔b8 22 ♘d6 ♖a7, but after 21 ♘d6 Black is left with no way to carry on: 21...♔b8 22 ♖xb7 is mate and 21...exd6 22 ♖f7+ gets rid of both rooks.

FALMOUTH – Grant Healey became Cornish Champion as the successful Cornwall Congress (3-5 May) attracted 77 players to the Falmouth Hotel. It was the first year the tournament has been open to players from outside the county, although we note that the top, 'championship' section was restricted to those graded under-190.

Championship: 1-2 Jonathan Wells (Norwich), Paul Helbig 4, 3-4 Stephen Dilleigh (both Bristol), Grant Healey (Truro) 3½.

Major: 1-2 Raymond Gamble (Derby), David Teague (Harrogate) 4, 3-4 Stephen Williams (Cwmbran), Graham Shepherd (Shrewsbury) 3½.

Minor: 1 Harry Minor (Isle of Man) 4½, 2-3 Christine Constable (Bude), Maurice Richards (Liskeard) 4.

JERSEY – Open tournament expert Sergei Tiviakov edged out defending champion Tiger Hillarp Persson to claim the £1,500 top prize at the Polar Capital Jersey Festival (6-13 April).

Open: 1 Sergei Tiviakov (Holland) 7½/9, 2 Tiger Hillarp Persson (Sweden) 7, 3 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 6½, 4-5 Damian Lemos (Argentina), John-Pierre le Roux (France) 6.

Holiday: 1 Eric Boisyvon (France) 8, 2 Richard Morgan (Chiswick) 6½, 3-5 Russell Finch (Guernsey), David Wilson (Jersey), Mike Gunn (Guildford) 6.

LEICESTER – The Midland Open Junior Championships took place in Leicester the week before Easter (16-18 April), comprising Under-18 and Under-9 Swiss tournaments.

Under-18: 1 Kishan Modi (Leicester) 6/6, 2 Merlin Davies (Daventry) 3½.

Under-14: 1-2 Jason Lv (Wigston), Pavel Murawski (Oxford) 4, 3-5 Teo Rybak (Maidenhead), Imogen Dicen (South Birmingham), Adam Hussain (Truro) 3½.

Under-11: 1 Jude Shearsby 4, 2-4 Manvith Sandhu, Margarita Sanchez (all Coventry), Tashika Arora (Oxford) 3.

Under-9: 1 Elis Dicen (Birmingham) 6, 2 Joshua Tang (Braunstone) 5, 3 Jan Murawski (Oxford) 4.

LONDON – Grantham's Stephen Prior triumphed with 4½/5 in the latest Hampstead Under-2200 Congress, finishing half a point ahead of Leo Sanitt (Hendon). Connor Clarke (Middlesex) won the Under-1900 section, also with '+4', and so edged out Alan Prince, Peter Lim (Harrow) and Dylan Mize (UCL) by half a point, while victory in the Under-135 went to Michal Kajda (Newham), who amassed a perfect score to finish a point clear of Nikita Berezin (Russia).

The latest Golders Green Rapidplay on May 11th was won by Ilya Iyengar.

Open: 1 Ilya Iyengar (Hendon) 5½, 2-3 Bao Nghia Dong (Loughborough), Nadia Jaufarally (St Albans) 4½.

Major: 1-2 Gopakumar Siddharth (Basildon), George Clarkson (north-west London) 5, 3-7 Rohan Pal (Birmingham), Mohammed Alahi (London), Sydney Jacob (Lewisham), Anum Sheikh (Ilford), Colin Lyne (Camberley) 3½.

Minor: 1 Savas Stoica (Barnet) 5, 2-6 Robert Kender (Mushrooms), Georgi Aleksiev (Bulgaria), Paul Chantrell (Kings Head), Alex Funk (Hendon), Declan Kilcline (Dunmow) 4½.

Amateur: 1-2 Patrick Damodaran (Kent), Tomas Garau (Battersea) 5½, 3 Mark McLeod (Didcot) 4.

Improvers: 1-3 Aaron Dhillan (Mottingham), Tianyou Xu (Hammersmith), David Clarkson (north-west London) 5.

Under-80: 1 Eliot Kalfon (London) 5, 2-3 Layla Bracken (Barnet), Abeer Gogia (Maidenhead) 4.

SOUTHEND – Cambridge undergraduate FM Matthew Wadsworth had another good result in the 12-player Southend Masters, sharing first place and £1,500 with an Indian IM and Argentinean GM.

Leading scores: 1-3 Matthew Wadsworth (Maidenhead), Khamparia Akshat (India), Damian Lemos (Argentina) 6/9, 4-6 Iain Gourlay (Richmond), Bogdan Lalic (Sandhurst), Alex Golding (Guildford) 5½.

Alongside the Masters, the traditional sections of the Southend Easter Congress took place (18-22 April).

Open: 1-2 Rhys Cumming (Hove), Antanas Zapolskis (Hendon) 6/7, 3 Henrik Stepanyan (Sutton Coldfield) 5.

Under-1900: 1 Alan Price (Edinburgh) 5½, 2-5 Alaa Gamal (Basildon), Seun Maraiyesa (London), Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), William Golding (Guildford) 5.

Under-145: 1 Christopher Willoughby (Brentwood) 5½, 2 Olga Latypova (Chelmsford) 4½, 3-4 David Smith (Maidstone), Timothy Crouch (Kings Head) 4.

Under-95: 1 Charlotte Willoughby (Brentwood) 6½, 2 Parag Kumar (London) 6, 3-4 Mae Catabay (Colchester), Kameron Grose (Wetherby) 4.

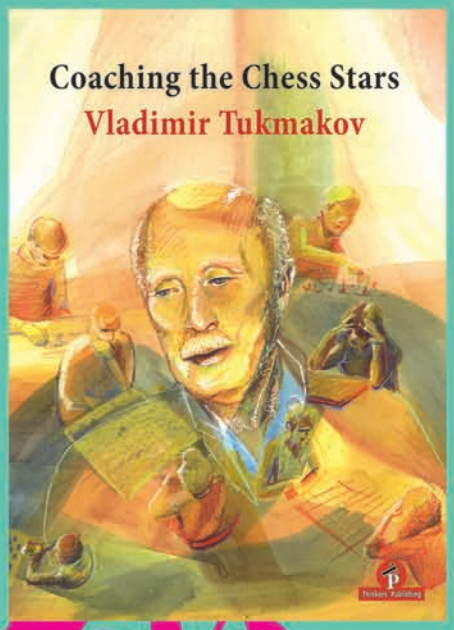
STEVENAGE – The 4NCL put on a strong Easter Congress at Stevenage (19-22 April).

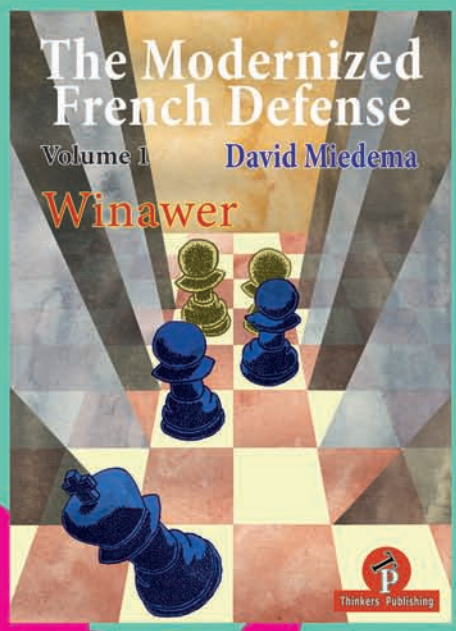
Open: 1-2 Marcus Harvey (Southampton), Mark Hebden (Leicester) 6/7, 3-6 Graeme Buckley (Sutton), Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Jonah Willow (Nottingham), John Richardson (Hendon) 5.

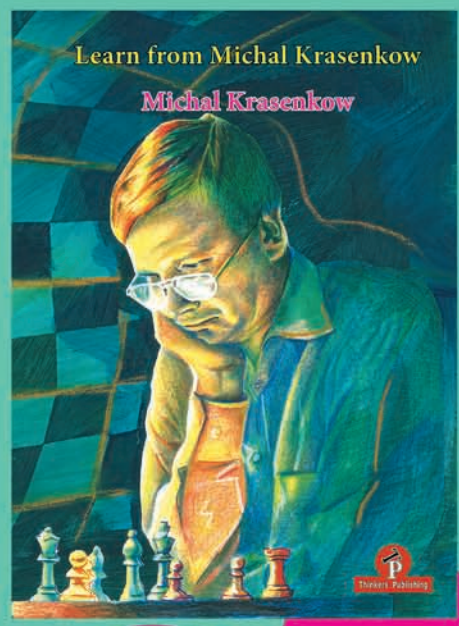
Under-2050: 1-2 Rangarirai Karu (Watford), Omowale Nelson (Welwyn Garden City) 6, 3-4 Richard Johnson (Bristol), Tony Slinger (Garforth) 5.

Under-1825: 1-2 Ron Usharovsky (Richmond), Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster) 6, 3 Stephen Pride (Royston) 5.

Under-120: 1-4 Tomy Joseph (Watford), Mo Jaufarally (St Albans), Tim Cutter (Sandhurst), Geoff Ainsley (Halifax) 5.







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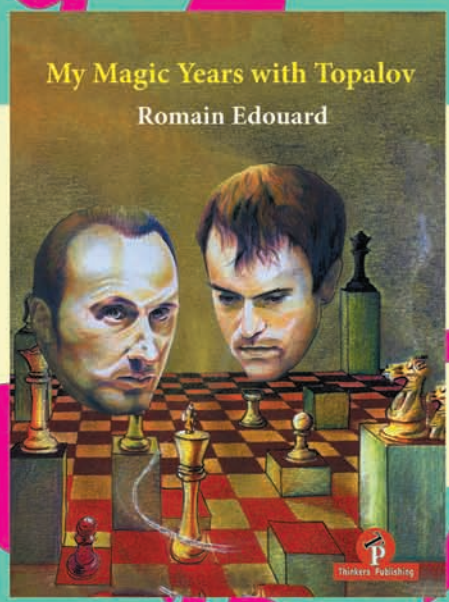

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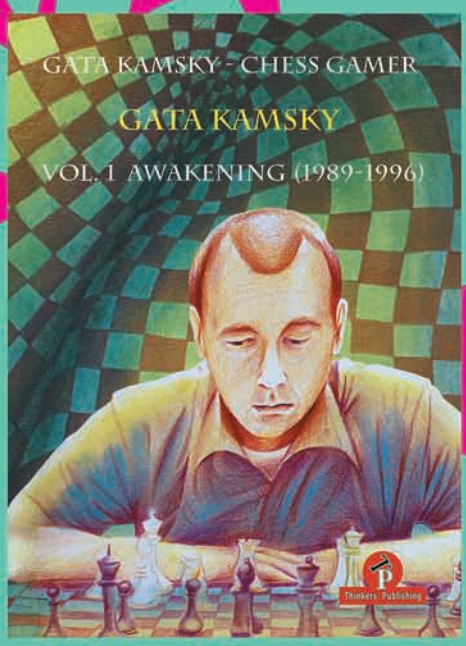

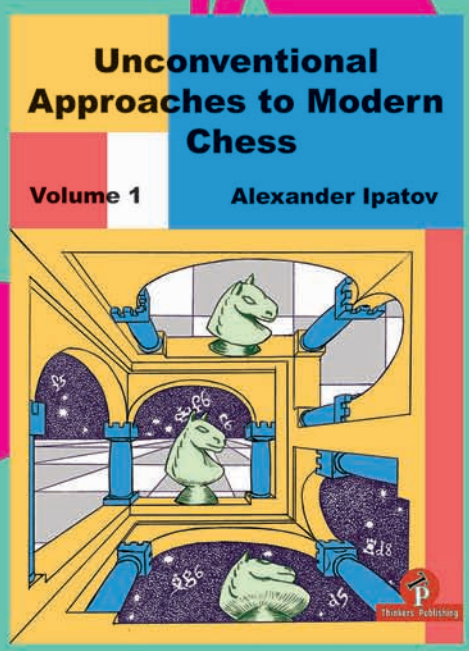

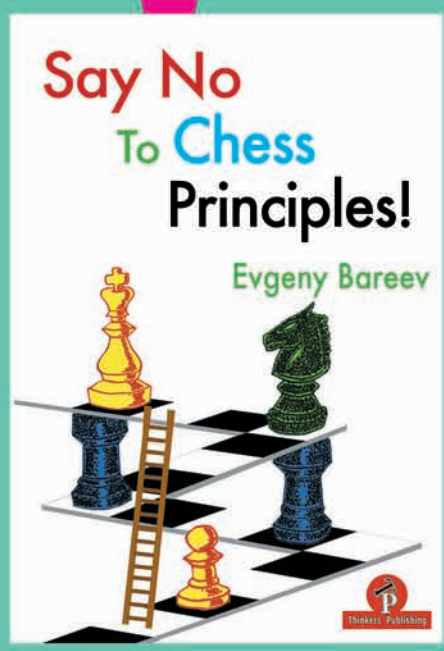

TELFORD – The 2018/19 4NCL season concluded in Telford, Blackrod and Daventry. On top of the action from the first division, as covered earlier in these pages, the winners and losers elsewhere were:

Division Two: Promoted – Barbican 4NCL II, Cambridge University, Spirit of Atticus, Gonzaga; Relegated – Manchester Manticores, Wessex, Bradford DCA Knights, West is Best II.

Division Three North: Promoted – White Rose II, Manchester Manticores II.

Division Three South: Promoted – Kings Head, Check Innmates 1; Relegated – CSC II, Iceni II, Leeds University Old Boys, Sussex Martlets II.

Division Four: Promoted – Crowthorne, Ashfield, and possibly two others.

The 4NCL have also announced the dates and venues for the 2019/20 season: 9-10 November 2019 (Divisions Three and Four; Maidenhead, South Normanton); 11-12 January (Daventry, Maidenhead, Blackrod); 8-9 February (Daventry, Maidenhead, Blackrod); 29 February - 1 March (Divisions One & Two, Daventry); 28-29 March (Daventry, South Normanton), 4-5 April (Divisions Three & Four, Daventry); 2-4 May (Daventry, Mortimer, South Normanton).

The Cornwall Congress could be considered a success. Grant Healey became Cornish Champion.

Overseas News

CHINA – Anish Giri has finally won a super-tournament, the Dutch Grandmaster outplaying Pentala Harikrishna in the last round of the 3rd Du Te Cup in Shenzhen (16-26 April). Prior to that encounter the Indian no.2 had won an extraordinary five games in a row, and in a tournament which is normally known for its high percentage of draws. Giri unsurprisingly remained undefeated, his other wins coming against Dmitry Jakovenko and Yu Yangyi before he journeyed on to Moscow for the first FIDE Grand Prix event.

GERMANY – A strong open took place alongside the first half of the GRENKE Chess Classic in Karlsruhe (18-22 April), also sponsored by the German IT company. Last year the Open was, of course, won by Vincent Keymer. This year it was the turn of a 43-year-old, not 13-year-old, to qualify for next year's top section, as Daniel Fridman prevailed on tie-break.

Leading scores: 1-8 Daniel Fridman (GER), Anton Korobov (UKR), Andreas Heimann (GER), Samvel Ter-Sahakyan (ARM), Dommaraju Gukesh (IND), Matthias Bluebaum, Alexander Donchenko (both GER), Tamas Banusz (HUN) 7½/9.

GREECE – Ahead of the World Senior Team Championships, the island of Rhodes also staged the European Individual Senior and Amateur Chess Organisation Championships (5-15 April). Terry Chapman led outright for two rounds in the Over-50s, which was eventually won by Zurab Sturua (GEO) on tie-break from Milos Pavlovic (SRB). Chapman eventually finished on '+2' for a gain of some 37 rating points, while Keith Arkell missed out on bronze by half a point. Danish GM Jens Kristiansen won the Over-65s, while Norfolk's John Wood made a welcome return to the board as he won the Under-1800 ACO section, with Bradford's Chris Bak bagging bronze in the Under-2200.

ICELAND – Gawain Jones had to be at his most determined and resourceful to save a lost endgame against Erwin L'Ami in the final round of the Reykjavik Open (8-16 April), and so join a large tie for first place, with Manx 4NCL player Constantin Lupulescu taking the title on tie-break. Gawain's wife, WIM Sue Maroroa, also did well, gaining some 40 rating points, while paying homage to the third game of the 1972 world championship match as she dismantled a strong Dutch FM.

3rd Du Te Cup, Shenzhen, China (Category 21, average rating = 2754 Elo)

	Player	Country	Rating	1		2		3		4		5		6		Pts	TPR
1	Anish Giri	NED	2797	*	*	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	6½	2855
2	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2723	0	½	*	*	1	0	1	0	½	1	1	1	6	2832
3	Ding Liren	CHN	2809	½	½	0	1	*	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	5½	2779
4	Richard Rapport	HUN	2726	½	½	0	1	½	½	*	*	½	½	½	½	5	2759
5	Dmitry Jakovenko	RUS	2719	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	*	*	½	½	3½	2651
6	Yu Yangyi	CHN	2751	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	*	3½	2644

Leading scores: 1-8 Constantin Lupulescu (ROU), Alireza Firouzja (IRI), Nils Grandelius (SWE), Gawain Jones (ENG), Mircea-Emilian Parligras (ROU), Tigran L. Petrosian (ARM), Aryan Tari (NOR), Abhijeet Gupta (IND) 7/9.

B.Van de Plassche-S.Maroroa
Reykjavik 2019
Modern Benoni

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♘ge2 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♘g3 exd5 9 cxd5 ♘h5!? 10 ♘xh5 gxh5 11 ♗d3 f5 12 0-0 f4 13 ♘e2 ♗e5 14 ♖b1

Black has the half-open g-file and a grip on the position. That helps explain why White preferred 14 g3!? fxg3 15 hxg3 in Braun-Vocaturo, Batumi 2006, which would have remained rather unbalanced and unclear after 15...♔h8.

14...h4 15 ♔h1 ♔h8 16 ♗d2 a6 17 a4

Allowing Black to lock down the queenside too and so 17 b4 might well have been preferred.

17...a5 18 ♗b5 ♗d7

19 g3?

Panic. White was understandably rather worried about g2, but he had to stand strong and after, say, 19 ♕b3 ♗xb5 20 ♕xb5 ♖f7 21 ♘c1! certainly wouldn't have been worse.

19...hxg3 20 hxg3 ♗h3!?

Direct and dangerous, but it was also possible to play in slightly slower fashion with 20...fxg3 21 ♔g2 ♗xb5 22 axb5 ♘d7 23 f4 ♗f6 when Black must be slightly for choice.

21 ♘xf4?

Black can meet 21 ♗xf4! ♖xf4 22 gxf4 ♗xf1 23 ♕xf1 ♕h4+ 24 ♔g1 with the highly aesthetic 24...♘c6, but after 25 dxc6! ♖g8+ 26 ♕g2 ♖xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♗xf4 28 cxb7 she can do no more than force perpetual.

21...♗xf4 22 ♗xf4 ♖xf4?

Highly tempting and a move you'd have to think was strong, but objectively Black should have preferred 22...♗xf1 and only then 23 ♗xf1 (23 ♕xf1 ♖xf4 24 gxf4 transposes to the game) 23...♖xf4 24 gxf4 ♕h4+ 25 ♔g1 ♘d7 with a very powerful initiative.

23 gxf4 ♗xf1 24 ♕xf1?

Both players overlook the remarkable 24 ♕e1!, after which best play appears to run 24...♕f6! (it's Black who will be mated after 24...♗xb5? 25 ♕c3+ ♔g8 26 ♖g1+) 25 ♗xf1 ♕h6+ 26 ♔g2 ♘d7 27 ♕c3+ ♘f6 28 ♔f2 ♕xf4 29 ♗h3 when one would still want to take Black, but the silicon displays its favourite '0.00'.

24...♕h4+ 25 ♔g2 ♘c6!

Threatening mate and absolutely crushing.

26 ♕e1 ♖g8+ 27 ♔f1 ♕h2 28 ♕c3+ ♘d4 29 ♔e1 ♖g1+ 30 ♗f1 ♕e2# 0-1

British no.1 Gawain Jones has been very busy of late. As we went to press, he was competing at the ISMA World Masters, a strong rapid and blitz event in Hengshui, China. April saw Jones compete in the Reykjavik Open and the Italian League, before he went straight from Brixen to Malmo and claimed first place in the TePe Sigeman tournament, on which more next month.

IRELAND – Dublin staged a strong international open (17-22 April), which featured 8 grandmasters. David Fitzsimons was the highest-scoring Irish player, making '+3', the same score as Banbury's James Jackson.

Leading scores: 1 Robert Ruck (HUN) 7½/9, 2-4 Twan Burg (NED), Aleksa Strikovic (SRB), Mher Hovhannisyan (BEL) 7.

ITALY – After a quick holiday in Iceland, Gawain Jones went on to the Italian Team Championship in mountainous Brixen (26 April - 1 May). Jones was held to three draws in the preliminary stages, but come the final won on top board against Polish GM Daniel Sadzikowski as Obiettivo Risarcimento Padova overcame Fischer Chieti 3-1.

IVORY COAST – The 2019 Grand Chess Tour kicked off in Abidjan, the largest city and economic centre of the Ivory Coast (8-12 May). Featuring seven of the 12 tour participants and three intriguing wildcard choices, including the African no.1 Bassem Amin, a hard-fought tournament looked in prospect, but once again things turned into the Magnus Carlsen show, the world champion winning his fifth tournament in a row, a streak beginning with the World Blitz.

Carlsen scored +2 =1 on each of the three days of rapid chess, which equated to 15 points overall (rapid wins were again worth two points; blitz victories just one), and a lead of three points over Hikaru Nakamura. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave was a further point back, level with Wesley So, but come the blitz the Frenchman was utterly dominant. He defeated Carlsen not once, but twice, and won the blitz section with 12/18, even at one stage briefly overtaking the Norwegian as the world's highest-rated blitz player. Having been a little out of sorts on the

opening day of blitz, Carlsen rallied on the second, to only finish half a point behind Vachier-Lagrave, with Nakamura a further half-point behind in third.

Carlsen's combined score of 26.5 was the highest yet recorded in a Grand Chess Tour Rapid & Blitz event. It still only gave him overall victory, $37,500 and a maximum 13 GCT points; Nakamura and Vachier-Lagrave each scored 23/36 for 9 points and $22,500.

I.Nepomniachtchi-M.Carlsen
Abidjan (rapid) 2019

31...♗g4! 32 ♕xg4 e2 33 b7

Black's extra queen proves too strong after this, but he surely also would have won in the event of 33 ♘d8 exf1♕ 34 ♗xf1 ♖xd8. **33...♕xb7 34 ♖xf2 e1♕ 35 ♕f5 ♕e3 36 ♖f3 ♕e2 37 ♘d4 ♕e5 38 ♕g4 ♕bxd5 39 ♘f5 ♕de6 40 ♕h5 ♕g6 41 ♕g4 h5! 42 ♕c4+ d5 43 ♕b5 ♕xg5 44 ♕d7 h4 45 ♖f1 hxg3+ 46 ♔g1 g6 47 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 0-1**

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SWEDEN – Gawain Jones went straight from the South Tyrol to Malmo and cemented his position as UK no.1 by having his best result of 2019, as he won the TePe Sigeman tournament (3-9 May). Jones scored an unbeaten '+3' to finish half a point ahead of Pentala Harikrishna. We'll have much more on this fine performance next month.

TURKEY – Jovanka Houska unfortunately missed out by half a point on qualifying for the Women's World Cup at the European Women's Individual Championship in Antalya (11-22 April). Alina Kashlinskaya was one of only two players to defeat Houska and took the title on tie-break. *Leading scores*: 1-5 Alina Kashlinskaya (RUS), Marie Sebag (FRA), Elisabeth Paehtz (GER), Inna Gaponenko (UKR), Antoaneta Stefanova (BUL) 8/11.

USA – Chess.com's successful PRO Chess League saw the top four teams from around the world qualify for a finals weekend, held for a second year at the Folsom Foundry in San Francisco (4-6 May). The Saint Louis Arch Bishops claimed their second title, perhaps no surprise considering that they had Fabiano Caruana on top board. The world no.2 scored 3½/4 in the deciding match against the Baden-Baden Snowballs, with the Chengdu Pandas edging out the Armenia Eagles for third. Earlier, on May 2nd, the famous Mechanics' Institute had exploited the wealth of talent in San Francisco for the weekend by staging a rapidplay, in which Fabiano Caruana was unable to grind down Jon Ludvig Hammer in the final round and so had to settle for a share of first with Carlsen's former second and also Georg Meier on 4½/5.

ISRAEL – *The big match in the Israeli League as Beersheva take on Ashdod. Not only did Ashdod win 4½-2½, but they also won all but one of their other matches to take the title. On top board we see Beersheva's Maxim Rodshtein playing white against Pavel Eljanov. Next to Eljanov, Ilya Smirin takes on Vladimir Malakhov, with Ashdod captain and FIDE Director General Emil Sutovsky deep in thought on 3. Sutovsky had a fine season, racking up 9½/11.*

Grand Chess Tour Rapid, Abidjan, Ivory Coast (Category 21, average rating = 2761 Elo)

	Player	Country	Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts	TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2861	*	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	7½	3029
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2761	½	*	½	1	1	½	1	½	0	1	6	2892
3	Wesley So	USA	2754	0	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	5½	2848
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2780	0	0	½	*	½	1	1	½	1	1	5½	2845
5	Ding Liren	CHN	2805	½	0	½	½	*	0	½	1	1	1	5	2805
6	Wei Yi	CHN	2736	0	½	½	0	1	*	½	½	1	½	4½	2770
7	Veselin Topalov	BUL	2740	½	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	0	½	3	2644
8	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2752	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	½	3	2643
9	Bassem Amin	EGY	2704	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	½	*	0	2½	2607
10	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS	2773	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	1	*	2½	2599

Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 26-28)

1) Bhatia-Fabri
1 ♕e8+ ♕f8 2 ♗h7+! 1-0

2) Krush-Zatonskih
1...♖a2! (1...♕h2+ 2 ♔e1 ♕g1+ 3 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 4 ♔d3 ♕xf3 5 bxc6 is also winning for Black, but not so easily) **2 ♕xa2 ♕h2+ 3 ♔f1 ♕xa2 4 bxc6 ♕a3 0-1**

3) Deswarte-Simons
1 ♕a7! ♗xg4 2 ♕a8+ 1-0 Mate follows on e7.

4) Robson-Sevian
1...♖fxf2+! (not the only way to win, but by far the most efficient) **2 ♗xf2 ♕g3+ 0-1** It's mate on f2 or h2.

5) Harrington-Dossett
1 ♘g6+! hxg6 (if 1...♔g8 2 ♘e7+ and 3 ♘xc8) **2 hxg6 1-0** Black must lose his queen just to delay being mated.

6) Sharevich-Gorti
White has just blundered, and most horribly with 1 h2-h3??: **1...♖xg2! 0-1** There's no stopping the h-pawn after 2 ♘xg2 gxh3 3 ♔f2 h2.

7) Sucikova-Steil-Antoni
1 ♗h5+! ♔xh5 2 ♕xf7+ ♔g4 (walking into a mating net, but 2...♕g6 3 g4+ wins the black queen) **3 ♔g2! ♕f6 4 ♖xd5** (logical, but 4 ♕h7 would have been even more brutal, followed by 5 f3+ and 6 ♖h1+) **4...♖xd5 5 ♕xd5 1-0**

8) Rusev-Badev
1 ♘b6+! ♔b8 (or 1...axb6 2 ♘b5 followed by 3 ♕a4+) **2 ♘c6+! 1-0** A neat final position, with mate following after 2...bxc6 3 ♘d7+ ♔a8 4 ♖b8+ ♕xb8 5 ♖xb8#.

9) Gelfand-Shankland
Black should head for rook against rook and bishop with 1...♗xe7! 2 ♖xe7, although not everyone knows how to hold it in practice. Instead, Shankland missed a little trick: **1...♔f7?? 2 ♗d5+ ♔g6 3 e8♕+! 1-0** A deadly fork follows on f7.

10) Kobalia-Antipov
1 ♘xf6+! gxf6 2 ♖e3 1-0 Black is toast in view of 2...fxe5 (or 2...♗g7 3 ♖g3) 3 ♖g3+ ♗g7 4 ♗xh6.

11) Bhatia-Fabri
1...♘c4 2 ♕c6 ♖c8 left Black a pawn to the good and with a powerful initiative in the game, where White, as we've already seen, managed to impressively rally and even win the endgame. She would, however, have had no chance of doing so after 1...♘f3+! 2 gxf3 ♗xh3 3 ♖b8+ ♔h7 when there's not much to be done about the g2-square, in view of 4 ♗b5 ♕d1+ 5 ♔h2 ♕xf3.

12) Chapman-Lewis
1 ♕c7! (leaving everything hanging; 1 ♖xd3! also works, and if 1...♖xd3 2 ♕b8+, 1...♕xd3 2 ♕e5# or 1...♕e2+ 2 ♔g1) **1...♕d4 2 ♘f6 1-0** White emerges a piece ahead after 2...♕d6+ 3 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 4 ♗c4. Instead, 2 ♖xd3?? ♕f2+ with perpetual check would have ruined everything, but 2 ♔h3! first would have led to mate.

13) Langreck-Short
1...♘f3! 0-1 A pretty, deciding blow and even stronger than 1...f5 2 exf5 h4. After 1...♘f3! 2 gxf3 (if 2 ♘xf3 gxf3 followed by 3 ♕xf3 ♕xc1 or 3 ♕c2 fxg2+ 4 ♔xg2 ♖g8+, while 2 g3 ♕xd2 bags a piece for starters) 2...♗d6 there's no good way for White to deal with the threat of mate on h2.

14) Adhiban-Maghsoodloo
1 ♖xf7! (even stronger and more aesthetic than 1 ♖xc8!, and if 1...♕xe7 2 ♘d5+ ♗e5 3 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 4 ♕xe5+ ♕g7 5 ♘f6) **1...♖xf7 2 ♖xc8+ ♖f8 3 ♘d7+! 1-0** 3...♕xd4 4 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 5 ♘xd4 is an extra piece and an ongoing, massive attack.

15) Dimitrov-Di Benedetto
White doesn't have to rush and did go on to convert after 1 ♖h2, but **1 ♘xb7! ♘xb7 2 ♗xa6** would have been decisive: 2**...♖b8 3 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 4 ♖ha1** (or even 4 ♖a7 ♖xa7 5 bxa7 ♖a8 6 ♖a1 ♘e8 7 ♖a6) 4**...♖eb8 5 ♖a7 g5 6 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 7 ♖a8+ ♔g7 8 b4** and the pawn armada will sweep all before it, with Black's minor pieces mere bystanders.

16) Korobov-Karthikeyan
1 ♖d6! (the pawn ending is a simpler win than 1 ♖a6 ♖d8 2 ♖a7 ♔e7 3 a4 ♖b8) **1...♔e7 2 d8♕+! ♖xd8 3 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 4 ♔d4 ♔d7** (4...♔c7 5 ♔e5 would prepare to devour the black kingside) **5 ♔c5 h5** (or 5...♔c7 6 a4 f5 7 a5 ♔b7 8 ♔d6) **6 a4 f5 7 a5 ♔c7 8 a6 e5 9 ♔d5 e4 10 fxe4 f4 11 ♔e5 1-0**

17) Smirnov-Henriquez Villagra
Black's king is in the corner, but how to win? Not with the **1 ♔c3?? ♖b3+! 2 ♔xb3 ½-½** of the game. However, it's possible to avoid any stalemate tricks, as with 1 ♕d1+! ♔a2 (or 1...♖b1 2 ♕a4+ ♔b2 3 ♕b3+ followed by mate on a3 or after 3...♔c1 4 ♕c3+ ♔d1 5 ♔d3, since there's no stalemate trick in view of 5...♖b3 6 ♕xb3+) 2 ♔c3, forcing the rook away from the black king and so winning it, as with 2...♖h2 3 ♕a4+ ♔b1 4 ♕e4+ ♔a1 5 ♕a8+! ♔b1 6 ♕b8+ and 7 ♕xh2.

18) Otruba-Obsivac
1 cxb5! (the first of two only moves, with 1 ♗e8?, for instance, being cleaned up by 1...b4+ 2 ♔d2 ♘xb3+!) **1...cxb5 2 b4+! ♔b6** (2...cxb4+ 3 ♔xd4 b3 4 ♗e6 b2? 5 ♗f5 halts the pawns) **3 bxc5+** (this and White's next aren't forced, but are the easiest way to draw) **3...♔xc5 4 ♗xb5! ♘xb5+ 5 ♔c2 ♔c4 6 ♔b1 ♔d3 7 ♔a1** (Black now settles for an immediate stalemate as there's no way to flush the white king out of the corner) **7...♘c3 ½-½**

19) Admiraal-Tregubov
The obvious moves are the correct ones: 1...♔b5! 2 ♖c3 (or 2 ♖b8+ ♔c4 3 ♖c8+ ♔b3 4 ♖b8+ ♔c2 5 ♖a8 ♔b2 6 ♔h2 ♖a1 7 ♖b8+ ♔a2 8 ♔xh3 ♖b1 when the white king finds itself far too far away) 2...♔b4!, and if 3 ♖xh3 ♖d2 when the a-pawn's a winner after 4 ♖h8 a2 5 ♖a8 ♔c3 6 ♖c8+ ♔b2 7 ♖b8+ ♔c1 8 ♖a8 ♔b1.

Instead, even a strong Russian GM was to err: **1...♔b6? 2 ♖c3! ♔b5 3 ♖f3!** (the key idea, resisting the h-pawn; Black wins after 3 ♖xh3 ♖a1+! 4 ♔g2 ♔a4) **3...♔c5** (now 3...♔b4 would just be met by a barrage of checks: 4 ♖f4+ ♔b3 5 ♖f3+ ♔b2, etc) **4 ♖f5+ ♔d4 5 ♖f3 ♔d5 6 ♖e3 ♔c4 7 ♖f3 ♖a1+** (freeing a2 for the king, if only it could safely get across the sixth rank) **8 ♔h2 ♔b4 9 ♖f4+ ♔c3 10 ♖f3+ ♔d2** (or 10...♔c2 11 ♖f2+, and not 11 ♖xh3?? a2) **11 ♖xh3 ♖a2 12 ♔g1 ♔c2 13 ♖f3 ♖a1+ 14 ♔g2 a2 15 ♖f2+ ♔d3 16 ♖f3+ ♔e4 17 ♖a3 ½-½**

20) Andersen-Hoffmann
Naturally, White must avoid 1 f5? ♘xf5, leaving him with the wrong-coloured bishop and rook pawn. It's also important to avoid the **1 ♗e6? ♘e2 2 f5 ♘d4! 3 ♔f7 ♘xf5 4 ♗xf5** and **½-½** of the game.

There are, however, a number of ways to win, including 1 ♗c4, 1 ♗f3 and 1 ♔g5!. The last of those avoids stalemate tricks and after 1...♔h7 (the f-pawn is too quick if 1...♘e2? 2 f5 ♘d4 3 f6) 2 ♗g2! (to reduce the knight's options) 2...♔h8 3 ♔g4 ♘e2 4 f5 ♔h7 5 ♔g5 ♘d4 6 f6 ♘e6+ 7 ♔h5! the king and f-pawn will gradually head up the board: for example, 7...♘f4+ 8 ♔g4 ♘g6 9 ♔g5 ♘e5 10 ♗d5 ♔h8 11 ♔f5 ♘g6 12 ♔e6! ♘f8+ 13 ♔e7 ♘g6+ 14 ♔d6 ♘f8 15 ♗e4 ♔g8 16 ♔e7 ♔h8 17 f7 ♘g6+ 18 ♔e8 ♘f8 19 ♗f3 ♘g6 20 ♗h5 and the win finally becomes clear.

21) Yu Yangyi-Harikrishna
Without the h-pawn the ending would, of course, be a draw, but its presence rather complicates White's task, eliminating stalemate tricks. He fell to defeat in the game: **1 h5? ♕h7!** (cutting off the white king from the kingside ahead of bringing back the black king with decisive effect) **2 ♔e8 ♔d5! 3 h6** (3 f8♕ ♔e6 is the problem, since only by ditching his queen can White avert mate on d7) **3...♕e4+ 4 ♔d8 ♔e6! 0-1**

Instead, 1 ♔e7! would have drawn: 1...♕e4+ (1...♕h7 2 ♔f6 is similar) 2 ♔f6 (note how Black isn't able to bring his queen around to f8) 2...♕f4+ (unlike in the game,

2...♕d4+ 3 ♔e7 ♕g7 4 ♔e8 ♔d5 is OK for White, as 5 f8♕ comes with tempo) 3 ♔e7 (or just 3 ♔g7) 3...♕e5+ (3...♕xh4+ isn't trivial, but by remaining precise, White can draw: 4 ♔e8! ♕e4+ 5 ♔d8 ♕f5 6 ♔e7 ♕e5+ 7 ♔f8 and the standard drawing mechanism arises after 7...♔d5 8 ♔g8 ♕g5+ 9 ♔h7 ♕f6 10 ♔g8 ♕g6+ 11 ♔h8!) 4 ♔f8 ♔d5 5 ♔g8! ♕e6 6 ♔g7 ♕g4+ 7 ♔h7 and Black is unable to make 'progress', apart from with 7...♕xh4+ 8 ♔g7 ♕g5+ 9 ♔h8.

22) Grandelius-Keymer

1 ♘f5! (highly thematic; 1 0-0 and only then 2 ♘f5 also does the business) **1...exf5 2 ♘d5 ♕d8 3 0-0-0** leaves Black temporarily a piece up, but quite helpless due to the pressure against both members of his royal family: **3...♗e6 4 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 5 exf6** (or just 5 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 6 exf6) **5...♘b3+ 6 cxb3 ♕c8+ 7 ♔b1 f4 8 ♗f2 ♘d7 9 h4 ♖g8 10 hxg5 hxg5 11 ♖d6 ♔f8 12 ♖xe6! fxe6 13 ♕xe6 1-0**

23) Rapport-Laznicka

1 ♗xb4! 1-0 Black was hoping to resist after 1 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 2 ♖1xg5 ♖f7 3 ♖5g6+ ♖f6, but 1 ♗xb4! cleans him up, in view of 1...♗xb4 (1...c5 2 ♗xc5 changes little, while 1...♖e8 2 ♘g5+ ♗xg5 3 ♖1xg5 forces mate) 2 ♖1g6+ ♖f6 3 ♘g5+ ♔d6 4 ♖xf6+ ♔c5 5 ♖xc7+.

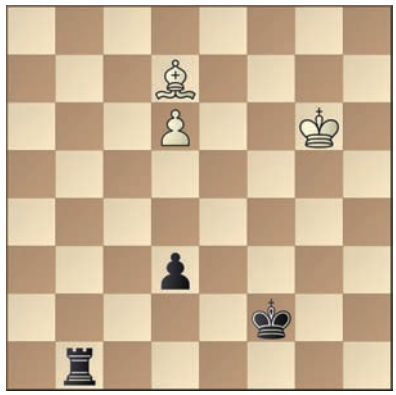
24) Nielsen-Maze

1 b4! (clearing the c-file; 1 ♕g4 ♖e8 was preferred in the game, when 2 cxd5 f5 3 dxe6! would still have been pretty effective) **1...♗xb4 2 cxd5 exd5** (naturally not 2...♕xb5? 3 c8♕, while 2...♖xd5 fails to 3 ♕e4! ♔f7 4 ♕xb4 ♖xb5 5 ♕xf8+!, as pointed out by John Emms) **3 ♗d6!** (neat; 3 ♕e3 ♖e7 4 ♕d3 also does the trick, and if 4...♖d7 5 ♕f5, overloading the defence) **3...♗xd6** (3...♕xb5 4 ♗xf8 and 3...♖xd6 4 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 5 ♕xd5+ are both hopeless) **4 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 5 ♘xd6** and the c-pawn will decide after 6 ♕e6 or 6 ♕f5.

Studies Winners

The winner of the November Studies competition was M. Ashton from Bury. The solution:

Henning Källström
2nd Prize,
Tidskrift för Schack, 1960

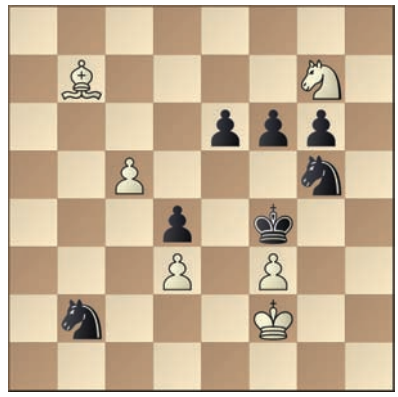


White to play and draw

1 ♔f6! ♖b6
1...♖b4? 2 ♗f5 d2 3 ♗c2 is an easy draw.
2 ♔e6!
And not 2 ♔e5? ♖b4 3 ♗f5 ♖b5+ 4 ♔e6 ♖xf5 5 ♔xf5 d2 6 d7 d1♕ or 2 ♔e7? ♖b7 3 ♔d8 ♖xd7+ 4 ♔xd7 d2 5 ♔c7 d1♕ 6 d7 ♕c1+ and wins.
2...♖b4 3 ♗e8 ♖e4+ 4 ♔d7 d2 5 ♗h5 ♖e2 6 ♗xe2 ♔xe2 7 ♔e7
Avoiding 7 ♔e8? d1♕ 8 d7 ♕a4.
7...d1♕ 8 d7
And as Black can't check on the e-file, White draws.

And the winner of the February competition was F. Girard from France. The solution:

Borislav Ilincic
4th HM., *Phénix*, 2017



White to play and win

1 c6
1 ♔e2? ♘a4 2 c6 ♘c3+ 3 ♔f2 ♘d5 enables Black to draw.
1...♘a4
Or 1...♘xd3+ 2 ♔g2 ♘f7 3 ♘e8 ♘d8 4 c7 ♘xb7 5 c8♕ ♘bc5 6 ♘xf6 and wins.
2 c7 ♘b6 3 c8♕
Avoiding 3 ♘e8? f5 4 ♘d6 e5 5 ♘c4 ♘e6 6 ♘xb6 ♘xc7, which is only a draw.
3...♘xc8 4 ♗xc8 e5 5 ♗d7!
Now it's zugzwang, and not 5 ♗f5? ♘xf3 6 ♗xg6 f5 7 ♗xf5 ♘g5 8 ♔e2 e4 or 5 ♗g4? e4!.
5...f5
5...♘xf3 6 ♘e6+ ♔g4 7 ♘xd4+ picks up the black knight.
6 ♗xf5! gxf5
Allowing mate, but if 6...♘xf3 7 ♗xg6 ♘g5 8 ♘h5+ ♔g4 9 ♘f6+, with a technical win.
7 ♘h5#

This Month's New Releases

Coach Yourself
Neil McDonald, 304 pages
Everyman Chess
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

Subtitled 'A complete guide to self improvement at chess' (shouldn't there be a hyphen there, as there is in the blurb on the back of the book?), this very interesting book is designed to help players who find it hard to move up to the next level. "Usually they get left behind because they don't know how to make best use of the time they have available to study chess."

Neil McDonald, an author who never disappoints, is here to help. "The aim of this book is to show you everything you need to be working on to become a better player. Tactics, strategy, and the endgame are covered in detail, and you are offered guidance on subjects such as calculation, analysing your games, and choosing your openings." Some of the material is, as he says, "*fiendishly* hard", but the book is never less than fully accessible.

There are 13 chapters, covering a whole range of subjects from 'Immunizing Yourself Against Blunders' to 'Make Good Opening Choices'. The material is augmented by plenty of common sense advice, helping to put the task ahead into context. Some of this will act as a timely wake-up call for those who choose not to accept the presence of certain weaknesses: "It is a big mistake to blame your losses on something abstract like not playing with enough creativity or not trying hard enough or feeling under the weather or distracted. These excuses are a way of hiding from the bitter acceptance of the technical inferiority of your play."

The games are well-chosen and highly instructive, with very modern games rubbing shoulders with older classics. One such golden oldie can be found in the chapter on 'Getting Full Value from Your King'.

T.Petrosian-W.Unzicker
East Germany vs USSR, Hamburg 1960

"Having built up a dominant position on the queenside and tied down the black queen and rooks there, Petrosian realized the time was ripe to start a direct attack on the under-defended black king. But flinging pawns forwards there would expose his own king to attack. Therefore he began by removing his king from the show towards a safe haven on the queenside."

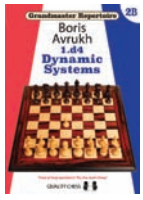
Petrosian started a remarkable sequence of moves with **29 ♔f1!**. He then spent some time walking his king the queenside (it ended up on b1), and broke open the kingside with an eventual h2-h4 and g3-g4. Unzicker resigned on move 55.

We can't all match the creativity and imagination of Petrosian, but the author stresses "The value of examining classic games. Besides the fun element, studying the old masters is an excellent way of learning both positional and tactical chess."

This skein runs throughout the book, connecting the various generations. Later on we find confirmation that Magnus Carlsen is: "An avowed fan of chess history. When asked which player was nearest to him in his chess outlook he cited Reuben Fine, a leading US Grandmaster of the 1930s." It is sad that any author feels the need to explain who Reuben Fine was, but I suppose most people look at database moves and not necessarily names when they are studying chess.

This is a very good book which will prove to be entertaining and instructive to club players who would like to improve their game. The material will be useful for coaches and tutors too.

Sean Marsh



Grandmaster Repertoire 2B – 1.d4: Dynamic Systems
Boris Avrukh, 592 pages, Quality Chess
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

Avrukh's latest book in his series offering a repertoire for 1 d4 players examines promising lines against the Benonis (except the Modern Benoni), Dutch, Benko and Budapest, plus the Modern Defence and anything else Black tries instead of 1...d5 (which is covered in great depth in volumes 1A and 1B).

Although he has written about these defences before, the author is certainly not content to rest on his laurels and he gives plenty of alternative lines this time around. For instance, he formerly recommended 4 ♘f3 against the Budapest, but has changed his mind and now prefers **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 ♘g4 4 ♗f4 g5** with **5 ♗d2!** instead of the more popular 5 ♗g3.

This allows White to offer sterner resistance to the pressure along the long diagonal, as shown in the sample line **5...♘xe5 6 ♘f3 ♗g7** (6...♘xf3+ 7 gxf3 is apparently very good for White) **7 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 8 ♘c3!** and Black's position is already looking a shade loose, while White is solid and has a good chance of obtaining a stable advantage.

Of course, the Budapest can be seen as more of a fashion accessory than a strong backbone for a repertoire. The Dutch Defence is the most frequently seen of all the openings covered in this volume, thanks partly to the efforts of Simon Williams, whose games and products hold great appeal for club and tournament players. Therefore it makes good sense to prepare some antidotes to Black's main variations. Here, we find White playing with a very straight bat, rather than utilising a sharp gambit. The Stonewall, for example, is met by **1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♘f6 3 ♗g2 e6 4 ♘f3 d5 5 0-0 ♗d6 6 c4 c6 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♕c2**.

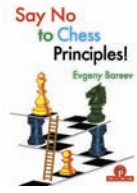
Seven options for Black are now considered. There is lots of interest here, including the conclusion that **8...♗d7**, "A popular and thematic Stonewall idea: Black intends to activate his light-squared bishop, which is undoubtedly a problematic piece in this type of pawn structure, via the e8-h5 route", is actually faulty, as after **9 ♕b3!** White ends up with a clear advantage, especially as Black's best move is now reckoned to be **9...♗c8**, which is clearly not something about which he should feel happy. It seems odd to move the white queen twice on consecutive moves, but it shows flexible thinking and it does look effective.

Staying with the Dutch, Avrukh coins a new name for variations beginning with 1...g6 before committing to ...f5. "As Black is toying with a 'modern' version of the Leningrad, the St. Petersburg Dutch seems an appropriate name for this scheme." White's plans are rather straightforward here, including **1 d4 g6 2 c4 f5?! 3 h4!**. Meanwhile, Avrukh's recommendation against the Benko Gambit has changed from the fianchetto lines to **1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 ♗xa6 6 ♘c3 g6** and now **7 e4**, allowing Black to exchange bishops and force White to castle artificially.

As usual with opening books from Avrukh specifically and Quality Chess in general, this one is definitely not for beginners and the material will also intimidate standard club players. Furthermore, I suspect some readers will find the '1A', etc, numbering system of similar-looking books confusing. However, diligent students who have a strong desire to increase the power of their 1 d4 repertoire and have the necessary motivation to do so will find lots of deep and impressive material here. Serious stuff, for serious players.

Meanwhile, fans of Avrukh's books will be disappointed to hear that he is going "To take a break from writing to pursue other chess-related projects", and it is currently not at all clear if or when he will return.

Sean Marsh



Say No to Chess Principles!
Evgeny Bareev, 278 pages
Thinkers Publishing
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

Being a cynical soul, I had of late become rather disturbed by the number of five star reviews handed out to chess books, both on Amazon and elsewhere. It seemed to me that the whole industry was an exercise in backslapping, so when Chess & Bridge sent me a copy of *Say No to Chess Principles!* by the famous Russian Grandmaster Evgeny Bareev, I saw it as a challenge. The first thing that struck me was the price: £27.95. Are chess books really that expensive these days? No wonder I wasn't buying any. And is Bareev's book worth the investment? Well, I would say: yes!

The material is divided into several chapters, including 'A Queen Behind Enemy Lines', 'At the Edge of the Board', and 'Killer Delayed Castling', all intended to convey the central message of the book, which Bareev explains at the beginning: "However it also happens that chess players often discover significant resources which formally exist outside the typical rules of chess. Those who know how to break all the rules and work around those specific guide-lines reach the very top."

Very true words. I feel like the whole issue of thinking outside the box has been under-estimated and most chess players are slaves to dogma, something that Bareev attempts to overturn in this book. It must be said that while some of the subjects covered here like 'play without castling' I was already familiar with (some of Karpov's games being striking examples of this), some of the other subjects like 'when a piece in the center is grim' and 'a piece down in a worse position' felt fresh and new.

Yes, I have often been in such positions thanks to my bad play, but the difference is I haven't seen an author analyse this situation before in anything more than a vague sense, which makes this book unusual and therefore interesting.

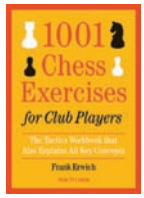
Bareev presents his material in a typically humorous and self-deprecating style, all the while illustrating the personalities behind the moves: for instance, "The very talented Alexey Vyzmanavin was so shocked by what happened that he ended up embracing alcohol. He lost interest in both chess, and as it turns out, life itself." While this feels like an exaggeration as it's hard to believe that the result of a chess tournament was entirely to blame for a chessplayer's demise, the reader can be thankful for this kind of penetration into the heart of the chess world.

The book does have its faults though; some more serious than others. At the start of the chapter 'A Piece Down in a Worse Position', Bareev writes: "The last example we will examine even happened at an elite level, in the game Magnus Carlsen-Gawain Jones, Wijk aan Zee, 2018", and yet the game never appears! I was left feeling short-changed.

The laid-back approach of the book is also something I'm not completely sure about. You can't help but think that other authors might have picked apart the material a bit more, explaining in more specifics why each game was included, and, indeed, most of the games in the book are from Bareev's own games. This can give the sense of the book becoming repetitive, although I'm probably being picky. You could also argue the opposite as well: perhaps the unscientific approach of the book is its genius. We are all too used nowadays to heavy tomes, where every subject is analysed in excruciating detail by authors in love with their own writing, and you don't get that from Bareev. He leaves it to the reader to make their own decisions.

Ultimately though these are trivial matters. What I do look at when I think about a chess book is whether the material will help me to improve, and whether I will recall any of it in six months' time. I feel that this book fulfils those goals, because what is within is both thought-provoking and inspiring.

Danny Gormally



1001 Chess Exercises for Club Players
Frank Erwich, 192 pages, paperback
RRP £15.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £14.35**

Subtitled 'The Tactics Workbook that Also Explains All Key Concepts', this new work maps out all the most common types of tactical blow. Dutch FM Erwich also shows how to look for weaknesses in the opponent's position and covers some important defensive skills. The material at the beginning of each chapter is clearly explained; the exercises which follow will certainly improve readers' vision, calculation and tactical memory banks.

Checkmate! The Love Story of Mikhail Tal and Sally Landau*
Sally Landau, 224 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Unlike the Chetverik book listed below, Elk and Ruby's other recent release is not your conventional chess book. Mikhail Tal and Sally Landau were married from 1959 until 1970, arguably the most important years of Tal's chess career. The couple remained friends until his death in 1992 and this memoir, first published in Russian in 1998, is certainly a gripping read, perhaps best summed up as a tale of triumph and tragedy.

*While *Checkmate! The Love Story of Mikhail Tal and Sally Landau* is likely to prove popular with Tal's many fans, do please note that at the time of going to press, stock was limited at Chess & Bridge. If interested in ordering a copy, do please contact the shop first via info@chess.co.uk or on 0207 486 7015.

ChessBase Magazine 189
ChessBase PC-DVD
RRP £17.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.15**

The latest issue of *CBM* is for 'May/June 2019' and features Vladislav Artemiev on the cover of the booklet which accompanies the DVD. The World Team Championship and Prague Chess Festival are the main featured tournaments, with various players annotating their best games, including Luke McShane on

A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Levon Aronian - @LevAronian
Scariest of them all

Anish Giri - @anishgiri
Wonderful to see @MagnusCarlsen in his absolutely top shape, crushing carefree and relaxed. I guess knowing that he is free from the World Championship match torture for a year gives wings! #GrenkeChess

Gawain Jones - @GMGawain
Thanks for a great event @tepesigeman. It was an honour to be invited. I could never have expected the chess to go so well.

Romain Edouard - @romain_edouard
Seventh @4NCL title in a row for Guildford - with the help of a few Women World Champions and a few Frenchies! Tomorrow off to @STLChessClub! @FressinetL

@chessnotes - @chessnotes
It'd surprise no one to learn that Ivanchuk is rated higher than: Gelfand, Ponomariov, Leko, Kamsky, Eljanov, Shirov, Morozevich... except that he's now 57th @2700chess

Peter Doggers - @peterdoggers
Fischer Random or #Chess960 officially recognized by @FIDE_chess is huge. After Steinitz-Zukertort in 1886 we'll see the first official Fischer Random world championship in 2019!

Simon Williams - @ginger_gm
Will be hard to stream for a week or so, busy schedule. This is what's on...
1) Currently at @chessbase HQ filming some DVDs. Then I fly direct to a stag do
2) Work on @chessable course
4) Film a joint DVD for GGM with @fionchetta
5) @DavidHowellGM filming for GGM.

Puzzle Rush - @puzzlerushchess
New #PuzzleRush World Record is now 62. Set just a few hours ago by @RayShayRobson who confirms his position as the World #1 #PuzzleRush player.

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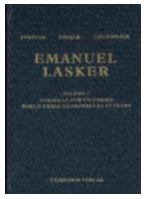
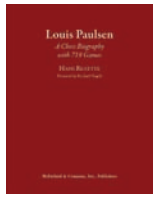
his dynamic draw with Sam Sevian. Simon Williams also contributes and there are opening surveys on the likes of the Classical Sicilian, Reti and Tarrasch Defence.



Emanuel Lasker: Volume 1
Richard Forster, Michael Negele & Raj Tischbierek, 450 pages, hardback
RRP £54.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £49.45**

The first of a three-part set, this volume is a major reworking and translation of the German edition of 2009 by printers Exzelsior Verlag. The names of the editors appear on the cover and are listed above, but plenty of other experts have contributed to this definitive work on the great German world champion. Michael Negele maps out Lasker's life story before Wolfgang Kamm and Tomasz Lissowski go into detail about his upbringing, while Tony Gillam contributes a very interesting chapter on 'Lasker in Great Britain'. Later we find Raj Tischbierek exploring the clash of dogmas that arose in the early twentieth century between Lasker and Siegbert Tarrasch, while Mihail Marin explains just how strong Lasker was in his chapter 'Dominator of the Chess World'.



Louis Paulsen:
A Chess Biography with 719 Games
Hans Renette, 442 pages, hardback
RRP £59.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £53.95**

McFarland may not be the only publisher producing serious works on chess history, but their lavishly presented books continue to impress. Author Hans Renette is a strong Belgian FM and something of an expert on the life of Louis Paulsen (1833-1891), the leading German player and theoretician of the second half of the nineteenth century. Paulsen is nowadays best known for his revolutionary opening ideas; others will recall that he was renowned for the slowness of his play. However, we shouldn't forget that he once drew a match with compatriot Adolf Anderssen for the 'world championship'. Those who want to learn much more about this dynamic and talented player should look no further than this new work, which is brought to life not so much by the vast quantity of the games Renette has unearthed, as by the biography and the 108 photographs.

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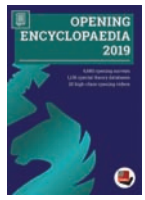


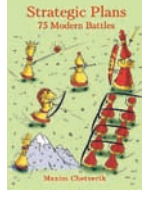
Opening Encyclopaedia 2019
ChessBase PC-DVD
RRP £88.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £80.05**

ChessBase's *Opening Encyclopaedia* has been around for many a year now, initially collating and building on the opening surveys in each issue of *CBM*. For 2019 the product has been completely redesigned, making for a clearer, more user-friendly interface: for instance, your favourite openings can now be found quickly by name, not just ECO code. In total the *Opening Encyclopaedia 2019* features some 6,680 opening surveys, as well as 1,136 'special theoretical databases' and 20 opening videos.

Those wishing to upgrade from *Opening Encyclopaedia 2018* may do so for £54.95 (Subs' – £49.95), but do please return the old DVD or quote the serial number when ordering.

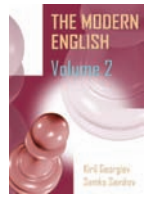
Opening Repertoire: 1 d4 with 2 c4
Cyrus Lakdawala, 448 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

When one thinks of an author for a main-line 1 d4 repertoire, Cyrus Lakdawala is perhaps not the first name which springs to mind and yet for his 40th chess book, the prolific Californian is determined to show that he too can cover some dynamic and fairly theoretical lines. There's perhaps no great surprise to see the Petrosian recommended against the King's Indian or 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗f4 against the Grünfeld, but 4 f3 is the weapon of choice versus the Nimzo-Indian, while 4 cxb5 a6 5 f3 is advocated in the Benko and even the Meran variation is covered. Lakdawala presents sufficiently detailed coverage for even the stronger club player to be able to rely on this repertoire, while throughout, in characteristic fashion, he is especially strong when presenting complete games and explaining the key middlegame ideas for both sides.



Strategic Plans: 75 Modern Battles
Maxim Chetverik, 240 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The emphasis of the Russian IM is on positional chess and especially planning. Drawing largely on games from 2018, Chetverik examines a number of battles where the aims of the two sides clashed, explaining clearly why the victor came out on top. Topics covered include when to open up the position, handling pawn chains and positional sacrifices, while along the way the reader will become used to the concepts of 'microplans' and 'macroplans'.



The Modern English Volume 2: 1...c5, 1...♘f6, and 1...e6
Kiril Georgiev & Semko Semkov, 256 pages,
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

The high-powered Bulgarian team of Georgiev and Semkov complete their repertoire with 1 c4 for White. The coverage is certainly theoretical in places, but is by no means inaccessible to the average club player, since in typical fashion publishers Chess Stars map out each chapter with the 'Main Ideas', which is a summary of the key lines and concepts, followed by 'Step by Step' coverage and then a few annotated games.

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One of the oft-stated joys of chess is being able to enjoy games from the past in their entirety. We get to see all the moves of all the great players of history, to a degree which aficionados of, say, football or cricket would have to envy. They can't watch the FA Cup for 1897, or an innings played by WG Grace, but we lucky chessplayers can relive the important games of our heroes in their entirety.

And yet this experience lacks the immediacy and excitement of watching a live encounter between the heroes of the here and now, such as Carlsen and Anand, whether in person or on the internet. Even so, we can occasionally get a little closer to the immediacy of historical chessboard action when we have the benefit of more data than the bare moves and can also read the recorded comments of spectators.

I was thinking of this recently when reading another old book, Bernard Cafferty's *Boris Spassky: Master of Tactics*, first published by Batsford in 1972. Perhaps the most famous game in the book is enhanced by the fact that the author was there to witness it, sitting alongside the magazine's founding editor BH Wood. Bernard also added another significant dimension to his account by recording the time the players took over each move. As I played through the game in the book, I found my enjoyment and understanding of it greatly enhanced by this, so thought I would share it with readers to see what you think. I've borrowed a couple of quotes from the book and kept annotations to a minimum, but included all the move times, in minutes, after each move.

It was played in the second of four rounds of the March 1970 USSR versus the Rest of the World match in Belgrade, which was then billed as 'the Match of the Century'. Justifiably so, since it featured all the top players in the world bar none (Karpov had yet to win his spurs), and featured the return to active chess of Bobby Fischer. However, it is not the great American we're dealing with here, but the world champion Boris Spassky facing Bent Larsen who – at least until a few minutes into this game – had a credible claim to be the world's best player outside the Soviet Union.

B.Larsen-B.Spassky
Rest of the World vs USSR,
Belgrade 1970
Nimzo-Larsen Attack

1 b3 (0) **e5** (0) **2 ♗b2** (0) **♘c6** (0) **3 c4** (0) **♘f6** (0) **4 ♘f3** (0)

Too provocative. A few weeks later Larsen played 4 e3 against Spassky at Leiden and the game was drawn.

4...e4

Just one minute was all it took for a confident world champion to take up the challenge.

5 ♘d4 (1) **♗c5** (4) **6 ♘xc6** (0) **dxc6** (1) **7 e3** (1) **♗f5** (4) **8 ♕c2** (3) **♕e7** (1) **9 ♗e2** (5) **0-0-0** (4) **10 f4?**

Two minutes consumed on this move, universally acknowledged to be very bad. White should probably continue 10 ♘c3, though even so his opening has not been a success.

10...♘g4!

Four minutes and Spassky has formulated a winning plan against Larsen's kingside. *Stockfish 10* concurs.

11 g3

After a 15-minute think, betraying Larsen's growing realisation that he was in trouble. The old adage 'marry in haste, repent at leisure' applies equally to impulsive moves on the chessboard. The game is all but decided. If 11 ♗xg4 ♕h4+ 12 g3 ♕xg4 13 ♕d1 ♕h3 14 ♕e2 ♖d3; White's light-squared weakness has reached catastrophic proportions and *Stockfish* awards Black an advantage in excess of '+5'.

11...h5

18 minutes; not signifying doubt or hesitation so much as time spent toying with the blunt instrument of 11...♖xd2!?. This also wins, but *Stockfish* prefers the champ's choice.

12 h3 (6) **h4**

Six minutes spent on this decisive sacrifice. Cafferty – "After this fine move, the hall with over 2,000 spectators bubbled over with enthusiasm. BH Wood and I who were sitting in the front rows feverishly analysed the acceptance of the offer, on a portable set, especially the variation beginning 13 ♗xg4. After some initial scepticism our conclusion was that Black should win, but I must admit in all honesty that we did not find Spassky's *coup de grâce* at move 14."

One imagines that a 21st century arbiter might have reproved spectators for using portable sets so near the players, but things were more relaxed in those days when there was no engine assistance to worry about.

13 hxg4

Larsen expended 53 minutes on this move. One imagines this was partly a desperate search for salvation, but also a desire to make the game length slightly more respectable. If we tot up the combined thinking times to this point, it comes to only one hour, 16 minutes, so resigning with the white pieces inside an hour and a half on top board would have been ignominious. At the very least Larsen might have received a withering look of contempt from Fischer, the man he insisted on displacing from the top board.

After 13 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 14 hxg4 hxg3 15 ♖g1 Black could continue as in the game, though the engines prefer the less flashy 15...♖h2.

13...hxg3 (1) **14 ♖g1** (0)

14...♖h1!!

17 minutes. "Here apparently the excitement in the hall transmitted itself to Spassky and he spent some time checking whether White had any defence. The answer is no!" (Cafferty). One imagines a modern-day chess commentator would summarise this move in just one word: "boom!".

15 ♖xh1 (4) **g2** (3) **16 ♖f1** (4) **♕h4+** (1) **17 ♔d1** (1) **gxf1♕+** (0) **0-1**

White's total thinking time: 1 hour, 35 minutes (plus the time taken before resignation – unrecorded, but probably not very long). Black's total thinking time: 1 hour, 5 minutes.

Did that extra information help bring home the excitement of the game? The sensation is palpable. I was mightily impressed by Boris Spassky's swift decision-making, showing that, at the time, he possessed the sort of confidence and swagger that Magnus Carlsen has today. Mind you, pride comes before a fall: in the following round, played two days later, Spassky fell to the ground with a bump after making a schoolboy blunder which cost him a piece and the game. But that, as they say, is another story.

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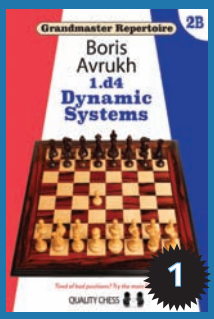

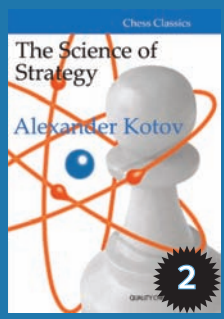

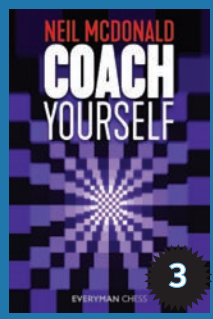

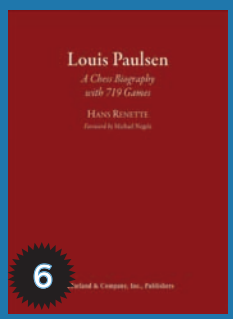

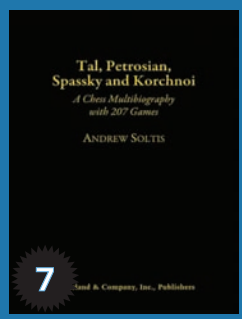

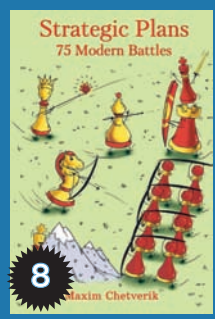

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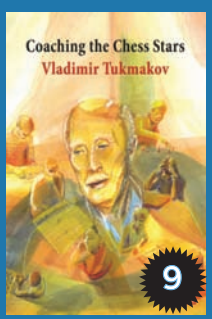

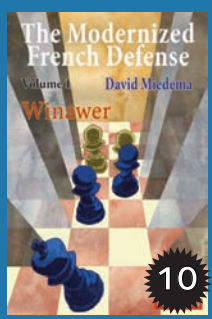

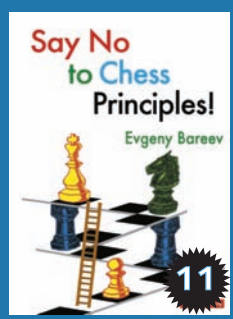

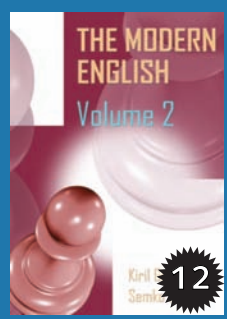

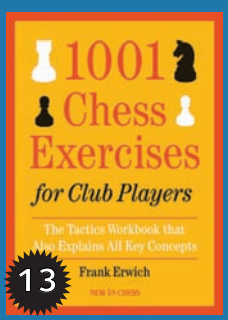

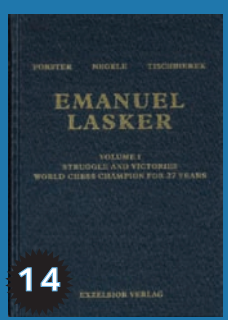

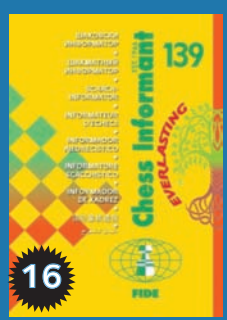

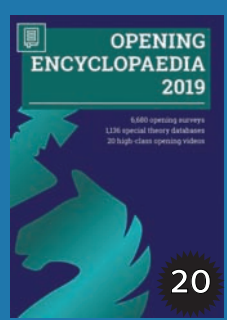

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